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SERMONS

ON

Various SUBJECTS,

By the RIGHT REVEREND

PETER BROWNE, D. D.

Late Biſhop of *Corke* and *Roſſe*.

Now firſt publiſhed from the AUTHOR's original Manuſcripts.

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SERMON XVII.

PREACHED

At the Pariſh Church of St. *Andrew*'s, Dublin, on *Sunday* the 15th of *April*, 1716. For the Benefit of the *Charity-School* for *Boys* in that *Pariſh*.

The Duty and Meaſure of Alms-giving.

MARK xii. 43, 44.

And he called to his Diſciples, and ſaith to them, verily I ſay unto you, that this poor Widow hath caſt more in, than all they which have caſt into the Treaſury.

For all they did caſt in of their Abundance; but ſhe of her Want did caſt in all ſhe had, even all her Living.

THIS treaſury was a kind of cheſt in the temple, anſwerable to the poor-box fixed in ſome of our churches, into which SERM. XVII.

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the free-will offerings were cast, for pious and charitable uses. Jesus sitting *over against* it where he could have the easiest view, and beholding how the people *cast money* into it, observed a poor Woman throw in *two mites*; which by the best computation were in value *three farthings* of our coin. The eyes of others, and probably those of his Disciples likewise, overlooked this poor contribution of hers, as inconsiderable and below their notice, and were intent upon the greater Sums of the rich: But Jesus who judged not according to appearance, *called to his Disciples*; the expression shews something of solemnity, and that he had a Matter of no small consequence to communicate to them. And lest he might thereby have discouraged the greater *offerings* of the rich, or given occasion of vanity to the charitable Widow, he at that time imparts what he had to say only to them; and lets them know, that what was seemingly so mean and despicable in itself, contained abundant matter of instruction, even to them who were to teach and reform the world: For that this was a singular instance of an excellent and exalted charity, and of the noblest munificence. They were to learn this *paradox*, new to them, as well as absurd and incredible to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees Hypocrites*; but full of *divine wisdom* and *truth* to such as are enlightened by the Gospel: Namely, that *two* Mites were more than an *hundred*; and that one brass *farthing* might be of

of greater intrinsick worth and value than *thousands of gold and silver.* SERM. XVII.

My business at present shall be to pursue our Saviour's design in transmitting this passage down to us; and to lay this great example before you in the best light I can for your imitation and encouragement. And this I shall do by observing the several things which it naturally suggests to us. Accordingly,

I. We learn from hence that the poorest sort of people are not exempted from this indispensable duty of *almsgiving*. The lowest rank of people under the *law* was not excused from these *offerings of God* which were to be made in the Temple; and the duty of almsgiving under the *Gospel* arises from the express command of God, Heb. xiii. 16. *To do good, and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* And Luke xi. 41. *Give alms of such things as ye have.* Besides, this example before us is more immediately fitted for the poor; and the gracious acceptance of that little gift shews us how well pleased God was with it. If any were left out of that command of doing good by distributing, this woman had sufficient reason to think her self of that number; being by her *sex* more helpless than a man, and a *widow* too, and not only so but a *poor* one, and reduced to one *farthing* to live upon, and perhaps could not tell when she was like to see another. The *widow* and the *fatherless* are proposed in scripture as the most common and signal objects

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of Charity, and yet even under this circumstance she thought it her duty to give *something*, though it was next to *nothing*. If any can pretend to be in a worse condition than this, then may they with some colour plead exemption from the performance of this great duty; for they only are excused from giving *alms of such things as they have*, who have nothing to give in alms.

II. The *second* thing we may observe from hence is, that the true Measure of our charities, in the account of God, is not the *quantity* of what is given, but the *proportion* it bears to our fortune in the World. This is the plain import of the text, and what our Saviour expressly asserts in the case of this widow who *cast more in than all they who cast into the Treasury*; nay though it is not improbable that the Disciples *themselves* threw something into it at the same time; for we find, *John* xiii. 29. that it was their custom to give to the poor out of the common stock. The reason assigned for this judgment of his is because the rich cast in ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος, of their *superfluity*; what was *redundant* and *unnecessary*, what could be spared, and that they might be well without. But she gave ἐκ τῆς ὑστερήσεως αὐτῆς, of what she *wanted her self*; what was to procure her not any *conveniency* only, but the very *necessaries* of life. So that it was not a *small* gift out of a *little*, which would have equalled any thing the

the rich gave out of their abundance; but it was all she had left in the world; and therefore it was impossible for her to be out-done. It was this that rendered her's such an excellent and exemplary charity; and if the widow's *farthing* was so well accepted because it was *all* her stock; nothing is plainer from hence than that the rich man's alms will not be accepted, if it be but a *little* out of his *abundance*.

A man who gives but a *little* to pious and charitable uses out of an easy and *plentiful* fortune, is the very *reverse* of this widow; and for the same reason her alms proved an acceptable sacrifice, his will be rejected as an abomination in the sight of God; who has told us that *he that soweth little*, that is little in respect of his wealth and riches, *shall reap little*, i. e. in scripture language, nothing at all; whereas otherwise we are taught by this passage, that he who soweth little out of a mean fortune, shall reap much.

There are in scripture so many *woes* pronounced against *rich* men, and so much said of the danger of acquiring riches, that it is enough to startle the minds of any who have them in possession; and fill them with anxious fears, and even despondency, with respect to their future state, who are not awakened with a sense of their danger, and perpetually on their guard. *Go to now*, says St. *James*, v. 1. *Ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries*

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that shall come upon you. Verse 3. *Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you*, i. e. at the day of judgment. *And shall eat your flesh as it were fire*; subject both soul and body to everlasting fire. *Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days*, a mass of wealth to inflame your account in the great day of accounts. Verse 5. *Ye have lived in pleasure upon the earth*, indulging your ease and humour in every thing, and therefore it will fall the heavier upon you in another world: And all this is pursuant to our Saviour's own doctrine, that *it is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Would not the consideration of this make any man thoughtful who had wealth or money in store, and who had any serious purposes of saving his soul, and escaping the damnation of hell? For surely there must be some reason extraordinary for pronouncing thus *positively* and in *general* upon the condition of the rich, without any express *exception* or *reserve*; and this can be no other than the insuperable reluctance they always find in themselves to the performance of this duty of distributing to charitable and pious uses, in such quantities as shall bear a reasonable *proportion* to their worldly substance. The great difficulty they are under of making a *friend* in time of the Mammon of unrighteousness,

ness, which will otherwise prove their greatest *enemy*; that false and treacherous Mammon which, it is odds, will deceive them to their utter ruin and destruction; but rightly managed will at last become their greatest friend, and receive them *into everlasting habitations.* SERM. XVII.

As harsh and severe as these sayings of our blessed Saviour and his Apostle seem, yet how remarkably do we see them verified in the generality of the rich men of this world? For how few of them are there who *give alms of such things as they have*, i. e. a good share of what God has blessed them with, and who *forget not to do good*; and *to distribute* according to their Abilities? Who *lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life.* i. e. Lay out so much of their fortune in charities, as shall be a comfortable ground for hope of salvation? How few of them consider they are but stewards, and do not look upon their riches to be all their own? And accordingly either heap them up for their *posterity*, or else live to the *height* of what they have, or even beyond it; and so put it out of their power to perform works of charity in such degrees as God will require at their hands? They live as if they were not one day to account with him for every penny, who has allow'd them part of their substance for a salary, and as to the remainder has left them Trustees only and managers for the poor. A lamentable reckoning too many of

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them will have with their great master at that time when their *souls shall be required of them.* So much expended in pomp and equipage; so much in gawdy cloathing, and costly dainties; such and such sums laid out in mode, and fashion, and gallantry: And at the foot of the account perhaps some scattered pence or farthings to the poor; as if they were to imitate this widow in nothing else but the bulk and size of her offering. But how very different from this will her account be? So much given at a happy opportunity to a publick and excellent charity, and nothing left to depend on but God's providence for a meal's meat. Learn from this Woman, who could want her food rather than be wanting in the discharge of this duty; learn I say from her, at least to part with all your *superfluities*; to *contract* your expences, and keep within *compass*, and cut off many unnecessary *forms* only of living; that you may not be under a necessity of *robbing God in his offerings*, and of coming short of such a quantity to be distributed for that purpose as shall bear a good proportion to your worldly substance. And this leads me to the

IIId. Thing observable from the text; namely, that whatever is the *quantity* of our alms, whether *greater* or *less*, yet God chiefly regards the heart it is given with. It is true the better a man's heart is, the more it will dispose him to distribute; but no quantity or proportion

proportion our alms bear to our worldly substance, is a sure indication of their proceeding from a truly *charitable principle.* They may proceed from vanity, or ostentation; or from some other selfish or unworthy motive; accordingly St. *Paul* supposes that a man may bestow *all his goods to feed the poor*, and yet it may *profit him nothing*, for want of that inward disposition of soul, which was so visible in her who was the subject of our *Saviour*'s remark. SERM. XVII.

She was in no danger of *vain glory* from a gift so small and inconsiderable, that it seemed not worth the notice of any there present except our blessed Saviour: And if she had not conveyed it into the corban or chest with *privacy*, that which was so approved and commended by him, would in all likelihood have met with contempt and ridicule from the Scribes and Pharisees, who gave their *alms to be seen of men.* Nor could she have any *selfish* or *worldly* motive; for what worldly motive could be stronger than present food for an hungry stomach? And she who could deny the cravings and necessities of nature rather than lose the opportunity of doing an excellent charity, could not have done it in prospect of any other worldly good. Besides, the *alacrity* and *chearfulness*, with which it was performed, is not obscurely intimated in the particular mention of her giving *two mites*, which was still more than if she had given one *farthing*, though they were of equal value. Had it been

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one piece of money, the doubt with her self would have been, whether she should *keep* it to her self, or *lend* it to God? But being *two*, there was fair Ground of hesitation whether she should keep *one*, and part with the *other?* This it self would have been a commendable charity, and she could have said with *Zaccheus*, *the half of my goods I give to the poor.* But so great was her soul, that though they were her last, she would not even divide with God, but make him a present of all; and this was sufficient proof of her being sorry it was no more.

How should this great example excite in us the like *ready* mind, and *forward chearfulness* of spirit which raised these *two mites* to such an immense value in the sight of God, who regards not the *quantity* only of our alms, but that *disposition* of the heart with which they are given; who tells us, Heb. vi. 10. That he is not *unrighteous to forget those works which proceed from love*; from the love of him, and our neighbour. Who commands his ministers to *charge them who are rich in this world*, that they be *ready to give*, and *glad to distribute*, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Glad to find out opportunities of doing good, and to seek them, and rejoyce to set forward any common and extensive good.

Now since it is the giving freely and willingly is that which sanctifies our alms; and that we are for that reason warned, 2 *Cor.* ix. 7. not

7. not to give *grudgingly*, or of *necessity*, for that *God liveth a chearful giver*; I cannot close this head without observing, that the main occasion of people's failing in this great and even essential qualification of their charities, and the reason why they do not give with a *willing* and *free* heart, is because they do not come to a fixed resolution with themselves to lay aside some certain *proportion* of their clear *gain* or yearly *income* for charitable uses; but generally leave this at *large* and *uncertain*, to be performed when they happen to be well disposed, and that objects or occasions of charity offer of themselves. This makes men careless and negligent in giving, and they do it with a secret reluctance; and at best with coolness and indifference. Whereas if they would observe the rule laid down by St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 2. that *every one do weekly lay by in store as God has prospered him*, i. e. *treasure up*, as it is in the original, and as it is elsewhere expressed, *Treasure up for themselves treasures in heaven*, Matth. vi. 19, 20. they would then be able to make a pretty good computation of what their *treasure* in heaven is; and what *foundation they have laid against the time to come*, for the *attainment of eternal life*. They would then make it their business to inquire for the greatest objects of charity, and seek diligently for opportunities of laying out their money in such an invaluable purchase. They would not trust their own heart, which *is deceitful above all things*, with a matter of so

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so great consequence to them; nor leave it to meer chance, and present temper, or inclination only; but determine well upon it from their best reason and most mature deliberation.

If any one should ask what proportion of our worldly substance would be reasonable thus to dedicate to God? I shall make no other answer than what the Holy Ghost has furnished us with in 2 Cor. ix. 7. *Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart.* And verse 6. *He that soweth little, shall reap little,* and *he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously.* It does not become us to prescribe bounds to what God has left at large and undetermined for wise and important reasons; namely that our deeds of charity may be *intirely free*; and that there might be *full scope* left for the largest soul to exert itself to the utmost, in a virtue which can never miss of a suitable reward in the highest degree that it is practicable; nay though men come up to this great pattern which Christ has laid before us. Which brings me to the

IVth thing observable from this passage, and that is, how little danger we are in of any *blameable excess* in the practice of this most excellent virtue. There is great danger of coming short, and multitudes have been undone thereby, and subjected themselves to that final and irreversible sentence, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; expressly said to be for their failure in the due discharge of this great duty: But since

since the world began was it never heard that ever any person over-acted this part? If ever it was any one's case, it must be that of this widow, who cast into the sacred treasury all she had, *even all her living*. The word is Βίος in the original, she parted with her very *life* and *sustenance*; which at *least* must signify the whole allowance of that day, perhaps her *hire* or *wages*; and then she both wrought and fasted for her gift. The rest out of their abundance contributed largely, but they still kept more behind; but Christ tells us she wanted what she gave: It was no imaginary but a real want; the greatest in nature, the want of *bread*. SERM. XVII.

Now though this woman's offering was all that God had allotted her for the supplies of hunger and thirst, yet we find our Saviour did not condemn her, or argue her guilty of any indiscreet profuseness; no nor of tempting God by rashly and intirely throwing her self upon his providence: But on the contrary magnifies her gift above all the pompous charities of the rich; and proposes it by way of example and encouragement to all posterity.

This is not the only instance wherein Christ has expressed himself upon the work of charity even in this exalted degree; his direction to the young man who *had great possessions*, Matth. xix. 21. was, *go and sell that thou hast*, Τὰ ὑπάρχοντα all your substance; ὅσα ἔχεις says St. Mark, all you have, *and give to the poor, and*

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and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven. This giving all a man's ſubſtance to charitable uſes, has but a very harſh and ungrateful ſound in the ears of a worldly minded man; nay in the ears even of ſuch as are perhaps at the ſame time reducing themſelves to want and beggary, by conſuming all their ſubſtance upon their luſts and vanities, and are thereby *treaſuring up to themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath.* And yet tell thoſe very people of parting with their ſubſtance and giving it to the poor, and that they ſhall have treaſure in heaven, and they will call it mockery.

But let not people be deceived; this ſaying of our Saviour's was not calculated for that ſingle perſon alone to whom it was ſpoke; for then it would not have been on record in the Goſpel; but is full of inſtruction to all mankind, and no more than what he recommends to his own *little flock*, Luke xii. 23. *Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide your ſelves bags which wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens which faileth not.*

Theſe ſayings of Chriſt are not to be taken in the utmoſt *rigour*, as if the advice were to part with all, and reduce ourſelves to the extremeſt want and miſery; it is not expected men ſhould act up to this widow, and not leave themſelves one farthing. But they import the giving to charitable uſes not only ſome reaſonable proportion of their annuity or gain, but the ſelling even their *poſſeſſions* and

and *estates*; the breaking *bulk*, and giving alms out of the *main stock*, and very substance of their fortune; and that the precept is not to be strained beyond this is plain, for that St. *John* had a house of his *own* long after it was given. And that even thus much is not always matter of necessary duty to all christians, is evident beyond doubt, from St. *Peter*'s discourse to *Ananias*, Acts v. 4. SERM. XVII.

The church of *Rome* understands this advice to the young man, to be a counsel only of perfection; as if by that *single* act of selling all they have, and giving to the poor; or by *vows* of a voluntary *poverty*, men were immediately in a more exalted state of *holiness*, in a condition above all other christians, and entitled to greater degrees of glory and to an higher station in heaven; this being a great fund of merit both for themselves and others. Whereas there is no such thing as a *state* or condition of *perfection* in the performance of any *single* virtue, or the attainment of any *one* particular *grace* in the highest degree: But true christian *perfection* consists in a *complication* of all manner of evangelical virtues and graces; in the gradual *increase* of universal piety and holiness; and in such settled and confirmed habits of them in all instances that they become the prevailing temper and disposition of soul and body: And even this is so far from *perfection* in the *strict* sense of the word, that after all we are *but unprofitable servants*. Their straining of the precept thus beyond

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beyond the plain and natural import of it, has given occasion to others to run into the quite contrary extreme, and take off all its force of persuasion and influence upon the consciences of men; and in short to render it no *motive* at all to the performance of this great duty. But as I said, this was designed for *our* instruction as well as *his* to whom it was spoke; and though it be no counsel of perfection in the strict sense of the word, nor matter of positive command to all christians, yet from thence we learn these three things.

1. That *selling* a man's estate or parting with the *bulk* or *substance* of his fortune to be disposed of in charitable uses, is always thus far a degree of perfection; that when it is performed with a good heart, it is a great and exalted degree of this virtue of charity, and ever highly acceptable in the sight of God, and will not fail of a suitable reward in another world: That is where it is truly our own; and that hereby no wrong or injustice is done to others; which in all likelihood was the case of this man who was young, and therefore as yet without necessary dependants and family.

2. We are hereby taught that *sometimes* this giving *all* or much the *greater part* of our substance to the poor, is very commendable and highly convenient; as in such cases of great extremity, when our *abundance* may be a necessary supply to the wants and miseries of many of our fellow-christians. This was

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the condition of the first professors of the Gospel; who many of them, Acts 4. *sold their lands and possessions*, and *distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.* And St. *Paul* tells us, 2 Cor. viii. 2. of the christians of *Macedonia*, that *in a great tryal of affliction their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*, i. e. that at a time when they were under great streights and difficulties themselves, they out of their *poverty* gave *abundance*, even beyond their power, for the supply of their christian brethren in *Judæa*. SERM. XVII.

A 3d thing plainly implied in our Saviour's discourse with the young man, is, that in some cases the selling all we have and giving it to charitable uses may become even matter of *duty*, and highly *necessary* to salvation. This was his very case; and that he understood it as a positive *command* to him, is plain by his going away *sorrowful*; for he would have gone away *chearful* if he had thought he might have entered *into the kingdom of heaven* without obeying what was a *counsel* only of perfection, and no necessary *condition* of salvation. It was to him an immediate call to follow Christ in person as the Apostles did, which he could not then do without quitting his great possessions; nor could he be sincere in his faith if he failed in that tryal of it which Christ then laid upon him, namely to sell his estate and distribute it in charities. And this will have the binding force of a *command* in respect of all other christians likewise when

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God shall call them to it by any publick and general calamities, and that the necessities and miseries of God's church and people plainly require it from them.

There is another case which may turn this advice into a positive and necessary command; and that is, when the frame and temper of a man's mind is such that a great fortune is an *invincible* temptation to him, and leads him into such occasions of sin as he finds by experience he is not able to overcome, but must *inevitably* be hurryed away with a constant supply of those allurements which are thrown in his way by it. In this case the parting with great possessions, or at least quitting the use of them, is no more than a necessary act of *self-denyal* founded on these sayings of our Saviour's, *where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also.* And again, *what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* For what worldly weight or consideration can a man throw into the ballance against his soul? And surely then it becomes incumbent upon us to sell all we have, and give to the poor, and follow Christ, when we cannot follow him without so doing. When riches become *any way* inconsistent with our eternal salvation, we must part with them as we must cut off a *right hand*, or pluck out a *right eye* It is more than probable this was the very case of that youth; and that Christ who *knew what was in man*, and could foresee

see how far he was from overcoming the temptations of a great fortune, from thence made his observation, how difficult it was *for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Does not our own experience shew us how this is daily verified, insomuch that alas! there are not many instances to the contrary? How most who come young into plentiful fortunes are for ever undone by them; hurried into all manner of vice and extravagance; and contract such a habit and relish of sin in their younger years, and do so entirely lavish away that portion of grace afforded them for their first setting out in the world, that they rarely or never after are brought to any feeling sense of *revealed* religion; insomuch that the *christian* is intirely sunk and lost in the *gentleman.* So great are the temptations of riches that Christ himself did not prevail for the performance of this in the circumstance of a person where he saw it necessary; much less may others hope to prevail on any in a like case to act up to this precept of his. Though like that young man, they go away with no other impression than that of some secret sorrow or regret at the hearing of this doctrine, yet let them take this with them, and remember that this saying of our Saviour's holds good to this day, that *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

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If there are any so prejudiced in Favour of the things of this world that they cannot re-

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liſh this doctrine, thus much at leaſt they muſt allow to be plain and undeniable from hence; namely, that if the heart is right in the point of almſgiving, we ſhall rather *exceed* than come *ſhort*. If there be a diſpoſition of mind truly charitable, it will ever prompt us rather to err on the right ſide, than fail of the utmoſt of what God may require of us; to venture an extraordinary *dependance* upon providence, rather than any *diſtruſt* of it: And in all our doubtings concerning how much we ſhall give to charitable uſes, we ſhall conclude the *moſt* we think of to be always *beſt*; and herein in ſome degree to imitate the good widow, who, to remove all ſcruple, decided the point againſt her ſelf, and gave all ſhe had.

Vthly. I think it a remark upon this excellent act of the widow's charity not to be paſs'd over becauſe it is ſo obvious; namely, that it was performed while ſhe was in *life* and *health*; ſo as to be able to diſpoſe of it with her own hands, nay though perhaps ſhe might have ventured her life for it, it being *all her living*. If ſcraping, and hoarding all that is to be gotten, for fear of beggary and ſtarving; and then only leaving all we have heaped together to charitable *uſes*, when it can be of no farther *uſe* to our ſelves, was ever commendable, it muſt have been in the perſon of this woman: But the favourable notice Chriſt takes of her is for the *contrary*, the giving while ſhe was in a condition of wanting

ing her self. From whence we learn that when men defer what they give in charity till they are going out of the world, though they firmly purpose to perform bountifully *then*, it loses all that which renders it acceptable to God; the *self-denyal* there is in it, and sparing from our selves; the *chearful* and *ready* mind, together with faith in the promises of God, and dependance upon his providence. Nay it is in effect a giving away what they have no title to dispose of, for as the Lord *Bacon* observes, *he who defers charities till death, is rather liberal of another man's than of his own.* The right of all our worldly substance at the hour of death devolves upon God, who then transfers it to another. *He who has pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord*; but sure it is a strange time to *begin* to lend to him when he is taking all from us, and that we can keep it no longer; and it is plain, if such a person could carry his money with him, he would leave none behind for charitable uses. *Thou fool*, says our Saviour of the rich miser, *this night shall thy soul be required of thee*, and then *whose shall those things be?* That is, any man's in the world rather than his who heaped them together. SERM. XVII.

Take therefore the Apostle's advice, and *do good unto all men as you have opportunity.* And that of *Solomon*'s, *give when thou hast it by thee, and say not unto thy neighbour, To morrow I will give thee*; that *to morrow* is ever coming to the worldly and covetous man,

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and it is never *to day* with him till he sees his last, and that the next morning is to be in another world. It is a wretched thing for a man to live to no other purpose but to hinder great sums of money from circulating and doing good either to himself or any one else; whilst he *lives* the poor may *perish*, and when he *dies* the poor may *live:* He keeps all from them as long as he can, and at last leaves that for *others* to do, which he could never find in his heart to do himself. If this Widow had done the same by her two mites, and if the rest who gave plentifully upon the same occasion, had forbore giving whilst they were alive, under a notion of some great and bulky charity at their death, how would the temple have gone to ruin? The publick worship of God ceased? And what multitudes of the poor and indigent had perished for want of the necessaries of life?

This is in truth no other than deferring the practice of one of the greatest and most indispensable duties till that time when the exercise of all virtues and graces in this world ceases: Nor is it only thus *absurd* in it self, but a manifest *inconsistency* with all the precepts in the scripture relating to deeds of charity and almsgiving. Is that a time to be *rich in good works*, when you cannot *work* at all? To *bring the poor to your house*, when you are your self in your *grave?* To lay up *store for the time to come*, then only when time is past? To *give* when you can do it neither with *simplicity*,

plicity, nor *mercy*, nor *chearfulness?* To do your *alms in secret*, when all the *world* must *know* of it? In short, to begin to *sow*, when you should *reap*; and to think then to make a *friend of the Mammon of unrighteousness* at a juncture when he is to commence your everlasting enemy? But above all, is that a time to *visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*, when your friends are *invited* to your *funeral?* I was sick and ye *visited* me, I was in prison and ye *came* to me; these two words are remarkable and worthy the divine wisdom, which are not to be taken only in the *figurative*, but even in the *literal* sense, and are designed to signify the *actual going* to see the poor; *viewing* their condition and circumstances with our *own eyes*; *finding* them out, and *acquainting* our selves with their miseries; and often giving them our alms with our *own* hands. As the very *presence* of those who relieve them is a comfort to the distressed and afflicted; and as we are hereby enabled to sute our selves to their several wants, and to distribute our bounty more seasonably and prudently; so it is no small improvement to our selves. Such as live an *easy* and *pleasurable* life, and know not the want of a meal's meat, have no notion of the miseries of the poor; and are therefore very bad judges of the real worth of this woman's charity. It is natural for them to think a farthing was as little to *her*, as to *them*; and that she parted with it because it was not worth keeping; but one

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visit to any of those many cells or cottages where *hunger* and *thirst* and *nakedness* have taken up their residence, would make them alter their opinion. If they were eye witnesses of the *straights* and *difficulties* many poor *housekeepers* struggle with, who have no work or employment and are ashamed to beg; and if they did but hear their children's *cries* for bread when they have *none* to give them, this would bring them to a *merciful* temper and disposition; it would make them truly sensible of the *bounty* of God towards themselves; it would teach them to *value* his *blessings*; it would create in them a true *humility* and *lowliness* of mind, as seeing what they themselves would be if they were in the same condition. And now let any one tell me what *effect* or *influence* all these precepts can have upon a *dying* man? Or how they can operate to all the wise *ends* and *purposes* of them upon him when he is dead? And this naturally leads us in the

VIth place to observe, what an excellent act of *faith* this woman's charity was, and of a firm *dependance* upon the providence of God. At the same instant she threw into the *treasury* all her worldly dependance, she must have resigned her body and soul into his hands to whom she made the present. This extraordinary act of a publick charity in one who must have been her self an object of charity, and stood in need of an alms, could have proceeded

ceeded from none but a mind exerciſed to an habitual diſcharge of holy duties, and wherein there was a complication of virtues and graces. She muſt have been uſed to faſting and abſtinence, and to frequent ſelf-denials, who could deny her ſelf the neceſſaries of life. She muſt have been ſtrongly affected with a belief of God's *all-ſufficiency*, as well as with a preſent ſenſe of his *all-ſeeing* eye. She muſt have had a warm zeal for the houſe of God and his worſhip; and have been of a tender and compaſſionate heart towards the poor, as having a fellow-feeling of their miſeries. She was ſurely of a devout and excellent ſpirit, endued with a great contempt of all worldly pleaſures and vanities; intirely void of all diſcontent, or murmuring at her poverty and the meanneſs of her condition; and of all envy at the flouriſhing condition of the rich who were able to give ſo plentifully. From whence we may learn, that the pooreſt perſon in the loweſt condition of life, hath it in his power to exerciſe the moſt *exalted* acts of virtue; nay and to out-do thoſe of an higher rank in that very particular of *almſgiving*, in which of all other duties they ſeem to have the greateſt advantage over him. SERM. XVII.

This was a full tryal of the *truth* and *ſincerity* of her heart towards God in a ſignal inſtance of duty and love, and upon an extraordinary occaſion; and a proof that no hardſhip or difficulty could overcome the reſolution of her mind in aſpiring to the greateſt height

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height of virtue and goodness which was practicable, nay though she starved for it: A person's passing such a tryal as this, in the only point of virtue and goodness expressly to be recited in the day of judgment, must be ever after a ground of unspeakable comfort for the rest of his life; it shews that God can call him to nothing which he is not disposed readily and chearfully to obey. But it must be a reflection full of sinking and despondency for a man to be conscious to himself that he has hitherto remarkably failed in what is to be the main article of his account; whatever appearance or profession of religion he makes in all other instances, he may conclude the heart is not right, and that his service is divided between *God* and *Mammon*.

It is worth observing, that in all this she acted upon no higher principle than what the old testament could furnish her with. She might have heard of *Manna* rained down from heaven for a supply to God's people in the wilderness; of the *Prophet*'s being *fed* by *ravens*; and the *widow*'s *cruice* of oyl which failed not in the famine. But she had not been taught that though *two sparrows* were so inconsiderable as to be *sold for a farthing*, yet that one of them could not be killed without God's permission; and that his care of us is such, that the very *hairs of our heads are numbered*. And yet we find how little thought she *took for her life, what she should eat or what she should drink*, who gave away *all her*

her living; and how truly she sought *first* SERM. *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and XVII. left it to him to add all other things as he saw fit. Compare this woman with those who make the fear of wanting an excuse for not giving to the poor; nay some to that degree that they are not without perpetual boading thoughts of starving in the midst of plenty. Then it is faith when we look upon what we give in charitable uses to be the surest provision for our selves and families, and think that we lend upon the best security. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath borrowed will he pay him again*; pay him with *interest*, and commonly in this life: And if we had the whole history of this widow, I doubt not but we should have had an account even of a temporal reward for such an excellent charity, and of some providential relief for her who had thus liberally *cast her bread upon the waters*. Whenever charity fails of a return either upon our selves or our posterity even in this world, it is in all likelihood because we give not chearfully or in proportion to our fortune, but sparingly or with distrustful and desponding thoughts. Or because, though we are not wanting in the quantity of our charities, yet we are not all of a piece, but fail in some other duties; for though we should *visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*, it is not *pure religion* unless we keep our selves *unspotted from the world*, James i. 22.

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VII. The seventh thing we may observe from this remarkable passage, is the great value and real excellency of a *publick* charity. The *corban* or *treasury* was a common fund for the repairs and furniture of the *temple*; for the support of the publick worship of God; and for the relief of the indigent. One would be apt to think that a *farthing* was not worth contributing to so *great* a fund; and that it was *vanity* in the widow not to lay it out in some private charity, whose low condition must have made her acquainted with miserable objects enough, and with such as wanted it to buy them bread. But we find *she* thought otherwise, who chose to contribute her two mites to a publick charity; and so did our Saviour, who from his full approbation of what she had done, and magnifying it above all the great and pompous charities of the rich, hath recommended the like practice to all posterity. It is true, private cases of great *extremity*, or sudden *exigence*, and present *misery*, require an immediate relief, and are preferable to any publick charity whatsoever; and this we are taught by Christ in the person of the good *Samaritan*, who was at expence in taking care of the man he chanced to find stript and wounded by the way; whereas the *priest* and the *Levite*, who passed him by, perhaps would have pleaded for themselves that they reserved their money for the *corban*. Such another seasonable act of generosity and kindness was that of the woman who consumed the precious

cious oyntment on our Saviour when he sat at meat, the price of which would have relieved many of the ordinary poor. The import of his answer upon that occasion was, that *his* was a particular and extraordinary case, it being done not meerly out of a customary compliment, but upon a great and sudden exigence, no less than by an excellent act of faith, the anointing of him for his burial. SERM. XVII.

But though such like instances of present *exigence* or *misery* claim a preference before all other, yet the contributing to promote a *general* and *publick* good is otherwise more preferable, as the good of the community is to be considered before that of any single person. The common poor you *have always with you*, and you need never want opportunity of relieving them; but opportunities of contributing to an united and publick charity you *have not always*. We find this Widow left the performance of those common and ordinary charities to them who were able to perform both; and wisely chose to throw her farthing into the publick treasury: And small as it was, you see it was not sunk in so great a mass, but came into the account with God, and brought her in for no small share of that universal benefit which from thence accrued to the whole nation of the *Jews*. This *little* gift was an argument of a *large* and *generous* soul, and shewed how plentifully she would have given if she had been able. As none could equal her

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her in her bounty for the reaſon given by our Saviour, becauſe there was none ſo poor, and that ſhe could not find any that wanted more than her ſelf: So had her fortune been equal to the goodneſs of her heart, ſhe had out-done them all likewiſe in the *ſize* and *number* of their offerings. She who could freely part with two mites for the publick good, and want bread for it that day, would have found no reluctance in paring off all the ſuperfluous vanities of a faſhionable way of living, and laying of them out in the purchaſe of heaven and eternal life. Nay it is plain ſhe had a ſoul as great as that of *David* or *Solomon*; and if ſhe had wherewithal, ſhe would have defrayed the charges of re-building the temple with all it's furniture, nothing inferiour to what it appeared in it's greateſt ſplendour.

If you are ſenſible of the true value and worth of a publick charity in the ſight of God, I ſhall here proceed to the preſent occaſion of my laying before you this great and excellent example of it propoſed by our Saviour in the Goſpel; which is a good opportunity now to be given of making tryal of our own hearts how far they are in a diſpoſition of being moved and influenced by it. Namely, a collection to be made for a number of poor helpleſs children, to be laid out in providing for them *cloaths*, and *books*, and *ſchooling*; in giving them inſtruction in the firſt rudiments of the chriſtian religion, and acquainting them with the doctrines and principles of our holy church; in

in teaching them such things as may qualify them for trades and callings; in binding them out apprentices, and so putting them into a condition of earning bread for themselves, and being some way useful to the publick. SERM. XVII.

Now because it is no small comfort to such as give, that they do it in a well-chosen charity; that they give with *prudence* as well as with a *free* and *ready* heart, it ought to be considered, that setting aside cases of *necessity* and present *misery*, this is one of the noblest charities in the world; insomuch that it is hard to tell how money can be given to better purposes, and how any liberality whatsoever can be greater in it's effects and consequences. For

1st. It is an immediate relief to the greatest objects of charity in the world; it is for cloathing the nakedness of poor distressed and fatherless children, who are not able to help themselves; and are by the providence of God exposed destitute of friends or relations, on purpose for a tryal of our obedience to God's commands; of our faith in him; and dependance upon those blessings which are promised to them who *provide for the sick and needy*. *Is not this the fast I have chosen*, says God in Isai. lviii. 6, 7. *When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him.* i. e. When you spare it from your selves, and off your own backs to cloath the naked; not only such as are *intirely* so, but such as are either *indecently* or *thinly* clad; in which sense St. *Paul* says of himself, 1 Cor. iv. 11. that he himself *was naked*. And what numbers

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numbers of poor distressed children are there in our streets wandering in rags and dirt, so as to be even offensive and nauseous; and left exposed, as St. *Paul* speaks of himself at the 13th verse, as the *filth of the world*, and *off-scouring of all things*; and in all extremity of weather even perishing with cold? The argument made use of in that place of *Isaiah*, is a very moving one, *hide not thy self from thy own flesh*; we may see our selves and behold our own nature in every one of those miserable children; they are the same flesh and blood with us; and therefore if we but look upon them and consider them, we cannot but be touched with a sense of humanity, and nature it self will prompt us to take pity on them.

But 2dly, this charity is not only for the immediate relief of their bodies, but for the saving of *their* souls as well as our *own*. It is for giving them instruction in all necessary points of faith and practice required by the Gospel. It is for moulding and forming of them in their tender years, before their appetites get the mastery of them, and that their passions grow resty and callous, and so inflexibly hardened, that they are past all relish of the joys of a good conscience, or any feeling of an evil one. It is for rooting out the *seeds* of vice and wickedness; for giving them early habits of *virtue* and *goodness*; for teaching them to *pray*; acquainting them with the *scriptures*, and furnishing their memories with such portions of them as may be a stock for the future devotion

devotion of their lives, and enable them to keep up some communion with God, even in the midst of work and business. SERM. XVII.

It is a reproach to our common christianity, that in the midst of a nation where it is professed and established, such multitudes should be found void of either natural or revealed religion, and even of the *first principles of the oracles of God*; scarce having tasted of the *milk of the word* which is necessary for the nourishment of *babes* in Christ. The ignorance of many among the lower rank of people, is incredible to any but such as have sought for opportunities of trying them; nay, many know no more of Christ than the name, and have as little knowledge of our salvation by him, as if they had been born wild *Indians* or *Americans*. And which is yet more lamentable, when once men are grown up in this ignorance, they are lost and undone past all remedy; for sad experience shews us, that when they pass their childhood and youth without any impressions of virtue and holyness, it is an insuperable difficulty ever after to work in them any truly sincere and lasting sense of religion. So remarkably true is that saying of the wise man's, *Train up a child in the way which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*; the full import of which is, that if you do not train him up in the right way while he is a child, he will hardly ever be brought into it afterwards. How deplorably is this verified through the whole

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rank of common beggars, who growing up destitute of all knowledge of the laws of God, and below the notice of humane laws, are generally the most corrupt and profligate part of mankind; without any sense or feeling of religion, and never use the name of any person in the holy trinity, but to profane it in their loud and importunate clamours for an alms: All which would have been in a great degree prevented, had the last age been sensible of the great and unspeakable advantages of this kind of charity. You see the importance of what you give to this use; it is for feeding the *lambs* of Christ with spiritual nourishment; rescuing them from the jaws of hell; building up immortal souls for heaven and everlasting happiness; souls as dear and precious in the sight of Christ *with whom there is no respect of persons*, as those of your *own* children, and equally the price of his *blood*. In short, it is to save them from perishing for *lack of knowledge*, which is infinitely worse than perishing with hunger and cold.

A third thing of no small consequence to which we contribute, is the breeding up numbers of children to be true and faithful sons and daughters of the purest and holyest church upon earth; and this must be a motive of great weight with all those who are sincere and unshaken members of it themselves: For surely that communion which they make choice of for their own salvation, *except they be reprobates*, they cannot but judge most safe for the salvation

salvation of others; they must be perswaded that the supporting, and encouraging, and promoting the interest of it, is one of the most acceptable works to God which they can do. It must be a great comfort to them to see numbers of poor children, who but for their bounty would have had no religion at all, come duly and orderly to church; to appear there in decent cloathing; and with an awful and reverend behaviour, such as becomes the house of God; to hear them joyn in our prayers and praises to God, and shew as much attention and devotion as can be expected from their tender years. This, God knows, is sadly overlooked and neglected by parents of a higher rank in their children; who for want of being used from the first to a constant attendance upon the service of God, and to the joyning with devotion in the publick worship, for the rest of their lives come to church to *lean*, or *gaze*, or make their *bows* and *compliments* to one another, even in the midst of the most exalted parts of divine service; or for any other purpose rather than to say their prayers with zeal and fervency, or bear a part in singing the praises of God.

I must not omit here that what is given upon this occasion, is for healing those *rents* and *divisions* which are made in the church, and a most effectual means of promoting peace and unity among christians. As too many who set up for *learning* and *refinement* do run into *infidelity*; so on the other hand, *ignorance* is

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the mother of *enthusiasm*; and this begets a race of *heresies* and *schisms*, which are in a great degree prevented by instructing children not in the *words* only, but in the *sense* and *meaning* of the church catechism; making them acquainted with it's *doctrines*, and *principles*, and *liturgy*; and creating in them a reverence for all *things* and *persons* dedicated to the more immediate service of God. This ever after prevents in them that *indifferency* to their own religion, and *lukewarmness* so expressly condemned in the church of *Laodicea*, and which is so fatally prevailing in our *own*: O! may God avert any farther parallel in the judgment likewise threatned, Rev. iii. 16. for that prevailing hypocrisy. This will keep them from being *tossed too and fro'*, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*; and from any affectation of that shameful halting between two opinions so much in vogue and fashion: So that they will walk *uprightly*, without a constant turn of the head, and a *side look* ever towards separate and contrary communions. This will lay a foundation for that *peace* and *unity*, that *brotherly love* and *christian charity* in the next generation, which is so notoriously wanting in this; for these poor children will have this advantage over those of Persons of greater fortune and quality, that they will grow up without any seasoning of *party prejudice*, and prepossession.

4. In the last place, it is worth considering how many and great the *secular* advantages of

of so well placed and prudent a charity are to the state. It is contributing to the common good and benefit of mankind. It is not only for the instruction of children in *divine knowledge*, for the salvation of their souls; but to learn them such things as shall first qualify them for it, and then to bind them out to *trades* or *callings*. This renders them useful to themselves and to the commonwealth; this rescues them from contracting such inveterate habits of idleness at first, which they can never after wear off; and puts them upon getting their living by an honest industry. This will considerably lessen that great multitude of vagrant and wandering beggars which upbraid us to God and the *world*, and daily multiply, to the disgrace, as well as curse of the nation; and unless the further growth of them be prevented by *charity-schools*, and wholsome *laws* for that purpose, may be the means of bringing down judgments upon us. SERM. XVII.

This will be found the most effectual means of converting the *Irish Papists* of this kingdom; a work which hath been too long neglected, and the omission hath met with its punishment in those rebellions and massacres they have been hurried on to, by a savage *nature*, and more savage and bloody principles. Experience hath shewn that all other means without this are like to prove ineffectual; the present generation have no more even of a *bad* religion than the giving up their *senses* and their *reason*, which makes it almost impossible

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for them ever to embrace the *true* one, but a general and united endeavour of setting up these schools for their children through the nation, before they have their *eyes* put out; and are grown up meer *ideots* in christianity, could not but have a great effect in a little time; and is the more likely to meet with a *blessing* and *success*, because of its being performed by *methods* of *charity*.

By *seasoning* so many children with an early sense of religion, and taking them off from a whole life of *idleness* and *want*, how many immoralities do we hinder, which they would otherwise be guilty of, and what a flood of iniquity do we stem? How many *cheats* and *thefts*, and *whoredoms*, and *robberies*, and *murders*, will be effectually prevented, which experience shews us it is not in the power of humane laws to restrain? All which, though committed by the lowest rank of people, yet come into a general account with God, and are added to that mass of sin which ripens a nation for divine vengeance. How many will by this means be relieved not only from *ignorance*, and *cold*, and *nakedness*; but from publick *shame*, and *prison*, and exemplary and untimely *deaths?* And is any thing more common, than for such as are brought to this, in their last dying words at the place of execution, to lay all their wickedness and misery upon the want of some care and instruction in their childhood.

What

What need I say more? Whatever is given on this occasion is for reforming the world, as far as lies in each of us, and laying up a store both of temporal and spiritual blessings for posterity. It is for making many, who would otherwise never come to any sense either of natural or revealed religion, good *christians*, and good members of the commonwealth; good *parents*, and good *children*; good *masters* and *mistresses*, and good *servants*; and in short, good in every relation of life. It is not only for redeeming multitudes from present *sin* and *misery*, who would be otherwise trained up and exercised from their infancy in all kind of villany; but enabling them to convey the many blessings *they* receive, to those who come *after* them; and they again will transmit them farther downward; which is doing good through many generations: And thus a man may be the instrument of unspeakable good to persons who shall be born long after he is dead; *he has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor, his righteousness*, even in this sense, *remaineth for ever.* SERM. XVII.

If it should come into any man's heart to think that these are great things indeed in *imagination* and *theory*, but may prove little in the real effects and consequences of the intended charity; and that if they could be sure of the event, they would spare no cost, but contribute with great freedom and alacrity. Then let me ask them, how far do they think this poor widow's farthing could go in the re-

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pairs of that great temple at *Jeruſalem*; in buying of *ſacrifice*; and finding a conſtant ſupply of oyl and incenſe for the worſhip of God? And yet was not this feeble effort as acceptable as if ſhe had paid down the price of hecatombs? If to our power we contribute to a general and laſting good, it is equal in the ſight of God as if we ſingly and in our own perſon compleated the work: Let us do our duty with faith and dependance upon God's providence; let the *charity* fail of it's conſequences, but let us not fail in our *charity*.

VIII. Having ſhewed you the excellency of a publick charity in general, and of this in particular, which is now promoting, I ſhall in the laſt place obſerve to you from the words of the text, the exact *notice* which is taken by God how all people from the *richeſt* to the *pooreſt* diſcharge themſelves in the performance of this great duty of alms-giving. A little before the words of the text it is ſaid, that Chriſt beheld ὁ ὄχλος as it is in the original, the *multitude* or *crowd* of people throw in their money; and yet ſo curious was he, and had ſo ſharp an eye upon every one of them, that he could form an exact judgment upon the *quantity* of each perſon's alms, and the heart it was given with; inſomuch that he could ſingle out this poor woman, who in appearance gave the leaſt of any one there, for the ſubject of his *remark*, ſo full of divine wiſdom and inſtruction; and could pronounce that ſhe had caſt *more in than all they who caſt into*

into the treasury. This one farthing did not escape his view, and he was so far from overlooking it, that he has published it to the whole world for all future generations; insomuch that whereſoever the Gospel is preached, *this also that this woman hath done, is told for a memorial of her.* SERM. XVII.

Here then is a *corban* or *treasury* for you who have *abundance* to give *plentifully*; and for you who have but a *little*, to give of that *little.* Though Christ is not visibly here in person, and that we cannot see him, yet he is even now looking on, and beholds what every one contributes. Little did that woman imagine *who* was then present, applauding her at the very instant, and saying in effect, *well done thou good and faithful servant.* But *we* know that the same all-seeing eye which is every where *beholding the evil and the good,* is now upon us, and that every farthing which is now given, and upon the like occasions, will be weighed in the scale; and a most exact scrutiny made what *proportion* it bears to our worldly substance, and what that secret disposition of the heart is with which it is given. Let us learn from hence to take care that the *smaller* contributions of the *poor* are not found to out-weigh the *greater* offerings of the *rich.* Let us learn rather to exceed in our charities, and fail on the surer side, than have them found light in the ballance when the great day of account comes. If we fall short in the performance of this duty, how then will these two

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two mites of a *jewish* woman rise up in judgment against the *narrow*, *scanty*, and I may say *beggarly* alms of too many christians, who are directly opposite to the spirit of the Gospel, and of this widow; *rich* in money and worldly substance, but *poor* in good works?

Her contribution was to the repairs of the *temple* only; what is given upon this occasion is for the building up and beautifying many *temples* of the living God. That temple was but wood and stone, and in a few years (as it seems from Luke xxi. 6. our Saviour observes upon this very occasion) there was not to be left of it *one stone upon another:* But these are so many *spiritual* and *immortal* souls, made to last for ever; and every one of them of greater value in the sight of God, than *Solomon*'s in all it's glory. That was built only for a *type* of Christ; these are all made after the very *image* of God, and are to be formed into the real *likeness* of Christ's glorifyed body. She gave for providing of *sacrifices* and *incense*, and the support only of a *ceremonial* worship; but what is now given, is for the presenting many *living sacrifices holy and acceptable unto God*, and for promoting of a *reasonable* service and *evangelical* holyness. She acted wholly from the dark rudiments of the law which gave a prospect only of a *temporal reward*, the great motive of the old testament; such as *he who giveth unto the poor shall not lack*, Prov. xxviii. 27. And again, *The liberal soul shall be made fat*, Prov. xi. 25. And, *cast thy bread upon*

upon the waters, and after many days thou shalt find them. But she was ignorant of those clear revelations which we enjoy under the Gospel; she had not learnt that our alms like those of *Cornelius*, come *up for a memorial before God*, Acts x. 4. That they are a *treasure laid up in the Heavens, that faileth not*, Luke xii. 33. That they are the purchase of an eternal weight of glory; and that we shall surely be recompensed for them *at the resurrection of the just*. Nor was she expressly told that *when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, and shall sit upon the throne of his glory*; and when *before him shall be gathered all nations*, that this of alms-giving is the great distinguishing duty upon which the separation of the *sheep* from the *goats* is founded; and the only instance to be inserted in the last joyful welcome, *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world*, &c. But least of all did this woman know, that all such deeds of charity are in the account of God as if done to the very *person* of Christ himself: *In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

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Behold then, you who have learnt all this, a number of those *little ones* in a very literal sense, who are prepared to be so many advocates for you in that great day; who will plead loudly that charity shewn to them, which your modesty would conceal; they will then rise up and call you blessed, and own the seasonable

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sonable benefaction. That they were *helpless* or *fatherless* children, and that you took *compassion* on them; that they were *naked* and you *cloathed* them; that they were *ignorant* and you *instructed* them; that you saved them from *want* and *beggary*; from a life of *misery*, and *sin*, and *wickedness*; nay many of them from *prison*, and *shameful deaths*; and were the happy instruments of saving their souls. One would think all good christians should rejoyce to have such a fund as this to cast their alms into, that they may come in for a share in the reward for all that great, and publick, and lasting good, which must be the effect and consequence of this most prudent kind of beneficence. Remember that all you spend in the *vanities* and *pleasures* of this life *perisheth* with the *using*, and that when *death* or the great *change* at the last day comes, we shall be in a moment stripped of all but what is given in good works, and charitable uses: Thus much we have made for ever our *own*; it is put out of the power of *fate*; and cast into a *treasury* which will remain *untouched*, when the whole world is *consumed* in flames.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

Senſe of Religion more obſervable in the middle and meaner rank of People.

MAT. xi. 25.

I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes.

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IT hath been ever accounted a great prejudice againſt any opinion or profeſſion, and never failed to be urged by the enemies thereof, where the cauſe would bear it; that it hath been generally received by mean and illiterate ſort of people; by ſuch as were low in the opinion of the world, and in leaſt reputation for knowledge and quickneſs of parts and apprehenſion: And this not without a very plauſible ſhew of reaſon; ſince it muſt be allowed, that ignorance makes men eaſy and credulous, and this actually diſpoſes them to ſuperſtition;

SERM. XVIII. ſuperſtition; to a ready aſſent to error and deluſion; and ſuch a zeal for what they have once entertained, as makes them reſty and inflexible in it.

Now becauſe this prejudice ſeems to lye ſo fairly againſt the Goſpel, which comes openly recommended to the poor and illiterate; which applies itſelf profeſſedly to ſuch, and ſpeaks ſo plainly of the difficulty there is to the rich and wiſe to enter into the kingdom of heaven: Therefore my deſign from theſe words is, to remove this prejudice, and juſtify the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in this matter.

And this I ſhall the rather do, becauſe the enemies of revelation think they have this *advantage* againſt us; for though they do not yet, that I know of, urge it openly, however they inſinuate that this gives a gloſs and colour to all their arguments; namely, that *they* are the men of converſation in the world, and of a more refined education and greater freedom of thought, who incline to reject and deſpiſe revelation. But this is ſo far from being any juſt prejudice againſt our cauſe, that, as I hope will appear, it is much to its advantage; it is no new thing; it was ever ſo from the beginning of the Goſpel. And the great author of our religion is ſo far from lamenting it, or being diſcouraged with it, that he praiſes God for it in this hearty form; *I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes.*

Which

Which ejaculation proceeded from a consi- SERM. deration of that sort of reception his doctrine XVIII. found among men, and the occasion of it was this; when the disciples of John the Baptist had departed from our Saviour, to whom they came on a message, to know whether he were the Messias; he took this opportunity of discoursing to the multitude concerning John, and to shew them how inexcusable they were for not receiving John's testimony concerning him.

It is plain, says he, *you* all allowed him to be a Prophet; for surely you did not go into the wilderness upon such a trifling errand as to see a reed played upon by the wind; nor did you go out to him to gratify your curiosity in seeing some great and extraordinary personage; you would have gone to a court for this, and not to a desart. So that it is evident you all went out to him as to a Prophet. And so far you are in the right, for he is more than a Prophet; for the Prophets and the law only prophesyed till John; (i. e.) all that spoke of Christ under the law, only marked him out at a distance; but John actually *points* him out and says, *this* is he. Now though you acknowledged him to be a Prophet, as he is in truth more than a Prophet; and though ye were all baptized into his doctrine, which was that of the immediate presence of the Messias; yet now you act in contradiction both to yourselves and him, in not receiving

me

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me for the Meſſias when he tells you plainly, that I am he.

Upon this he obſerves to them how they fruſtrated all the methods of God for their converſion; eſpecially the Scribes and Phariſees, and Rulers, who of all men had the beſt title to him and his doctrine, and ought to have received him with the greateſt readineſs and chearfulneſs. But on the contrary, from the days of John the Baptiſt until now, the kingdom of heaven ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force (i. e.) from the beginning of John's baptiſm to this very day, it is obſervable how the wiſeſt and greateſt men of the Jews, the generality of the rulers, neglected the high priviledges of the Goſpel, and deſpiſed the mercies of God offered to them in Chriſt: Whereas the publicans and ſinners, the proſelytes, and mixt multitudes break in upon their inheritance, ſeize upon their birth-right, and ſhare it among them like a prey; and they whoſe more immediate right the Goſpel is, are totally excluded from any ſhare, like perſons robbed and plundered of all their ſubſtance. Therefore it is that *he rejoyced in ſpirit*, as St. Luke hath it, and offered up this thankſgiving to almighty God, that he had thus hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes.

By babes, in this text, we are to underſtand innocent, plain, and honeſt perſons of a low and meaner rank among men, who are little

little in the esteem of the world for their want of riches and honours, their learning and parts: As they are opposed to the wise, and rich, and powerful men of this world; and they are called babes from that simplicity and ingenuity of disposition which is generally remarkable in them, and hardly to be found among those whose minds are full of the knowledge, and the wealth, and grandeur of this life.

The occasion and meaning of the words being thus explained; in enlarging on them I shall observe this method.

1. I shall be a little more particular in shewing the truth of this saying of our blessed Saviour's.

2. I shall consider the reasons of this, and where the true cause of it lyes.

3. I shall shew where the great wisdom of God appears in this manner of dispensation.

4. And lastly I shall draw some inferences from the whole, and make some application of it to the two different sorts of people mentioned in my text.

I. As for the truth of this saying, it hath appeared in a great degree already from what hath been said; and perhaps there is not any one thing more frequently and plainly inculcated in the holy scriptures, than the great indisposition of the wise, and rich, and powerful, for the reception and practice of the Gospel; and therefore the poor and ignorant, the people of no figure, or notice in the world, are every where supposed to be the only persons

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in a condition of yielding to the sincere belief of its doctrines, and hearty practice of its precepts: And accordingly it is directed to them in particular; and all others are, as it were, given over as men of whom there is little hopes. 1 Cor. i. 26. *You see your calling brethren*, (says St. Paul) *how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* It is true they are not peremptorily excluded; but however, the Gospel speaks of them with a great deal of diffidence, and very little assurance of any success upon them. And therefore in James ii. 5. it is said, *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be heirs of the kingdom?* And as it follows, *the rich men blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called.*

Now this is so remarkably fact, with respect to the christian religion, that it is become one great argument of its truth and divinity; for among many other things which were foretold of the state of the Gospel, several hundred years before it appeared in the world, this was one; and particularly Isai. xxix. 19. speaking of the times of the Gospel says that, *the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and it is the poor among men shall rejoyce in the holy one of Israel.* This, as well as all the other circumstances foretold, had a most exact completion; and therefore, when the disciples of John came to ask our Saviour whether he were the Messias; instead of a direct answer he observes to them, how the blind receive their sight,

ſight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the Goſpel preached to them. And accordingly the men our Saviour choſe for his diſciples were of mean employs, uneducated, and people of his own humble rank in the world. When he began to preach we find, (Luke vii. 29.) that the multitudes and the publicans heard him; *but the Scribes*, (i. e.) Lawyers, *and the Phariſees rejected the counſel of God towards them*; deſpiſing the doctrine of our Saviour, as they had before done the baptiſm of John; inſomuch that they themſelves uſed this as a powerful argument againſt him; *have any of the Rulers and the Phariſees believed on him?* They were the Scribes (i. e.) Lawyers who came tempting him, and endeavouring to entrap him with inſidious queſtions: He was condemned by the High-Prieſt and council of the Jews; and was at laſt crucified by the power of the magiſtracy. SERM. XVIII.

After he was gone, and the management of affairs was left to his Diſciples, the ſucceſs was the very ſame; great multitudes were converted, but ſtill of the meaner ſort: And among the Philoſophers or Stateſmen, the rich and great, and wiſe men of the world, it was only an odd perſon here and there that embraced the Goſpel. The Chriſtians were of ſo little note that they could not obtain intereſt enough in the civil power to ſtop a perſecution, undertaken upon any frivolous pretence; inſomuch that they underwent ten of them

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ſucceſſively. And though the number of chriſtians was very great in the world, yet it was three hundred years before the Goſpel was received at court; and it was no ſooner there but it found the poiſon too ſtrong for the cure: It was remarkably corrupted by what it was deſigned to reform; and then began the *Arian* hereſy, with all its various brood of errors, to infect and rend the church in pieces.

Till then hereſy never paſt into a law, nor was ſupported by the civil power. It was improper to ſay the church was corrupted, becauſe though there were many hereticks, yet they were always a ſect by themſelves; and the church never failed to uſe that power ſhe then had of declaring againſt vice and error; and purging herſelf of all infection; and cutting off all unorthodox members, either in doctrine or practice, from the myſtical body of Chriſt.

The governors of the church had not yet given up that power, derived immediately from Chriſt, into the hands of the civil magiſtrate; and betrayed that juriſdiction, in matters purely eccleſiaſtical, which they had no power to diſpoſe of; nor others to receive, or exerciſe it for them.

Nor doth this ſaying of our Saviour's reſpect only the firſt times of the Goſpel, but is univerſally true of all ages of the church. It is among the middle and lower rank of people that there is generally the trueſt and moſt ſerious ſenſe of religion; and very little of the true

true zeal and ſpirit of the Goſpel is viſible in the courts of princes. Wherever there is moſt of worldly buſineſs and grandeur, there religion finds the cooleſt entertainment: Not but that there are and have been many particular inſtances of the contrary; but my meaning is the ſame with our Saviour's in my text, that this is generally true. And accordingly, the experience of our own age can let us ſee plainly, how it is the ſtateſmen, and philoſophers, and politicians of the world that ſlight and diſregard the Goſpel; it is the pretended wits of the age who make ſport with it; and the refined modiſh freethinkers, ſubtle reaſoners that watch to ſpy out fallacies, and would ſeriouſly argue it out of the world. SERM. XVIII.

II. I am to enquire into the reaſons of this, and where the true cauſe of it lyes. And before I come to ſpeak more particularly to this, it will be neceſſary to ſhew, that it is not any want of evidence, or reaſonableneſs in chriſtianity, that occaſions this diſeſteem of it in the opinion of the rich, and great, and cunning men of this world; and which makes it more acceptable to the plainer ſort of people. If there could have been a religion more agreeable to the higheſt reaſon of man, we had not had this. The myſteries of our religion are revealed to us by the ſame God who gave us our faculties of knowledge; and for him to give us a religion which we cannot entertain without acting in contradiction to theſe, would be to leave us under a neceſſity of diſobeying

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him. But if the truths which God hath revealed to us in Chriſt be agreeable to the pureſt, and moſt uncorrupt reaſon of men; ſo that if they conſider them without prejudice, it is impoſſible but they muſt aſſent to them; then they are left without excuſe; and the name of God will be juſtified in their condemnation, as it will be glorified in the ſalvation of all thoſe who believe and entertain them heartily.

Now to make it appear that chriſtianity is agreeable to the ſtricteſt and moſt refined reaſon of men, let us ſuppoſe ourſelves in a meer ſtate of nature; the very condition that the enemies of revelation are bringing us to as faſt as they can; and then conſider what things mankind would wiſh to be reſolved in, and what are the points of greateſt concernment to us, about which we ſhould be moſt inquiſitive, and which would certainly take up our moſt anxious thoughts; and we ſhall find them to be theſe following.

1. How we came into being; what ſort of beings we really are? And what ends we were made for.

2. How mankind came to be corrupted, and in this miſerable condition of infirmity.

3. What cure can be found for this corruption of our natures; to reſtore us to health both of body and mind.

4. Whether there be another life after this.

5. What ſhall be the reward of virtue and the puniſhment of vice.

6. What

6. What ſort of government there is in the univerſe. SERM. XVIII.

It is plain if we had no revelation, and were in a ſtate of heatheniſm, theſe are the points concerning which we ſhould make the ſtricteſt enquiry, or at leaſt ought to do ſo; becauſe they are the things of the utmoſt importance to us. Let us therefore conſider what account chriſtianity gives us of theſe things, and compare them with what we have received from the wiſeſt heathens; and then it will appear whether our revealed religion is rejected and deſpiſed by the wiſe men, the wits, and gentlemen of faſhion of the world, for want of any *reaſonableneſs* in it. And I ſhall do this the rather, becauſe it muſt be acknowledged that the ſureſt way of knowing what men could do, without revelation *now*, is to conſider how far their natural abilities have reached, when they were altogether without it: Eſpecially ſince the wiſe men of the heathen world have already made as great a progreſs as was poſſible, for mere reaſon in the knowledge of theſe important matters, which ought to be the greateſt enquiries of mankind; and yet upon a view of them both it will appear, that *the fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men*; that *the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men*; and that *no worldly wiſdom hath reaſon to glory in his preſence.* And therefore,

I. As to the firſt great enquiry, which is, how we came into being. This is one of the

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first things that offers itself to our thoughts, and that to which the mind of man is led by a natural curiosity: And accordingly all parts of the heathen world have had their different conjectures, and nothing hath occasioned greater variety of opinions. Some of the philosophers would have it that the race of mankind did exist from all eternity; which opinion they were led to for want of abilities to solve the difficulty; for when they could not tell how mankind came to have a beginning, all they had left to say was, that he had none. Others have guessed that mankind was first formed like vermine, out of slime and mud, by the heat and warmth of the sun. But this is so far from being true of mankind, that modern experiments have shewed us, that there is no such thing as any anomalous generation of animals, not even of flies. Others, and a nation too very famous for learning and arts, held that mankind was first formed in the earth like mandrakes, and then sprang up like trees. The Americans believed that their idol Deity shot some arrows into the ground, which became men and women. The Chinese will have their idol to have created the first man, and have given him a power and commission of creating others. And lastly, that is a well known story of Prometheus's forming the first man of the earth; and when he had done, leaving the lifeless carcass here on earth, till he went to heaven and stole some fire from the

chariot

chariot of the ſun, by which he inſpired it with life and motion; and with all what a ſtrange expedient the oracle found out for the reſtoration of mankind, after it was *deſtroyed* by Deucalion's flood. SERM. XVIII.

Now theſe, and ſuch like, are the ways which the wiſeſt of the Heathens have found to bring us into being. But the holy ſcriptures tell us that we are the workmanſhip of the one only true God, who is infinite in wiſdom and power, and by whom were all things made that were made; that we were created at the beginning of this earth male and female; that he made us of the earth; that duſt we are, and to duſt we ſhall return; that he breathed into us a living ſoul, and made us after his own image, (i. e.) of a ſpiritual and immortal, of a free and reaſonable nature; ſo that we now can ſay with David, *thy hands made me and faſhioned me, and I am wonderfully made; thine eyes did ſee my ſubſtance yet being imperfect, and in thy book were all my members written, which day by day were faſhioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

By this we know well from whence we had our being, and to whom we are to return the glory and the praiſe of it: But all other accounts are trifling and fooliſh; and though we ſhould grant that many of them are only the fictions of their Poets; yet it is plain they are ſubſtituted inſtead of the truth; and that which put them upon invention was, becauſe they were wholly

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wholly ignorant of the true way. But ſuch fictions and inventions as they are, they went to make up the body of the heathen theology; they were part of their creed, and whatever the wiſer ſort thought of them, yet the generality believed them, as they believe the romiſh legend in the church of Rome.

II. Another enquiry of the greateſt importance to the whole race of mankind is, how we came to be in this corrupt and degenerate ſtate. They all were inclined to think we were not originally ſo; and therefore as they very much bewailed this depravedneſs of human nature, and its proneneſs to all manner of wickedneſs; ſo they talked much of a golden age, a time when there was no wickedneſs in the world; and when men were not afraid of one another; when love, and amity, and peace reigned among men; and when juſtice, and temperance, and chaſtity prevailed over the world: But when Aſtrea fled to heaven all virtue and goodneſs went along with her, and left all vice and wickedneſs to reign upon earth. Another way they had of ſolving this corruption of human nature was, by ſuppoſing two firſt principles or cauſes, the one the cauſe of all the goodneſs and perfection, who made us pure at firſt; the other the author of all evil and imperfection, which corrupted us afterwards; which is a faint alluſion to the truth. Some of the Philoſophers would have the ſoul corrupted before it came into the body, and ſo retain its original pravity, but

gave

gave no account how it became so in that pre-existent state which they suppose. The Americans say that mankind came very pure out of the hands of the Deity, but he had a mischievous mother who spoiled all *that he made, and mankind among the rest.* SERM. XVIII.

Cebes, in his portraiture of human life, attributes this corruption to a poisonous glass, which every one drinks more or less of as they enter into life. And we know the ancients attributed this to a box full of all diseases and infection, which Jupiter sent down among mortals; being incensed with Prometheus for the fire he stole from heaven; or rather out of envy at those new creatures he had made, which when it was opened the infection flew out, and filled them with all those distempers both of body and mind.

These, and such like, are the result of the wisdom and learning of those who were void of all revelation.

I need not stay to shew how ridiculous and senseless they are, and how much below, not only revelation but, the ordinary reason of a man: Whereas the account our revealed religion gives us of this, is plain and easy; it tells us that when God had made our first parents pure and unspotted, they became corrupt by their own wilful disobedience, in transgressing a positive command given them for their good; that they were tempted to this by the Devil, the great enemy of mankind, who

SERM. XVIII. who for this very thing is called a murtherer from the beginning; and in the ſecond chapter of the book of wiſdom, it is ſaid, *God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity*; nevertheleſs, through the envy of the Devil, death came into the world. And that our firſt parents being thus corrupted, we derive the ſame corruptions both of body and mind from them by a courſe of nature.

III. The greateſt and moſt important enquiry of all is, what remedy can be found for this corruption of human nature; and what means can be effectual enough to reſtore mankind to the ſtate of perfection they were in at firſt?

Now in order to this, natural reaſon tells us, that when a fault is committed againſt any one, there are two things neceſſary in order to a reconciliation; there is firſt ſome amends to be made for the injury; and ſecondly a ſecurity that they will not be guilty of the ſame again. And accordingly upon ſuppoſition that we are in a corrupt and ſinful ſtate, there are theſe two things to be done.

1ſt. There is ſome ſatisfaction to be made for the wilful corruption of our nature, and our actual ſins. And that ſome ſatisfaction was to be made to the divine juſtice, ſeemed to be known even by an inſtinct of nature; becauſe that cuſtom of ſacrificing prevailed ſo univerſally over the world, and in all ages.

This

This shews they all imagined that some atonement was to be made; and the way they took for this was that of offering beasts upon their altars; and thus, as they imagined, appeasing the anger of the Gods with their blood, by making them suffer that death which they acknowledged as due to themselves for their own offences. This was the true cause of their sacrificing, and the very notion which continued it, the principal part of all heathen worship; and this shews it to be the sense of all mankind. And indeed it would be a very hard thing to give a reason, why a satisfaction should be made to men for an offence, and yet not to God: If they say God is more merciful than men; then it is easy to answer that he is more just too, and that there is a great deal of mercy shewn even in admitting of a satisfaction. SERM. XVIII.

Now thus far they were in the right, that some atonement was to be made, especially if we consider that in cases of publick calamities, and where whole cities and nations were concerned, they offered even human sacrifices; and though this shewed they imagined an effectual atonement was to be made by one of their own kind, yet it was impossible to reconcile this to the common notions of justice; why one man should suffer for the sins of another. But it was besides all the sense and reason of man to think as they did, that the blood of a harmless innocent beast, should take any guilt off them, and make a sufficient

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cient atonement by dying in their ſtead: So that as far as they deſigned and underſtood their meaning, it was no other than unnatural cruelty; and inſtead of atoning for them, it looked like adding one guilt to another.

But our revealed religion hath diſcovered to us the reaſon of this; and now we ſee plainly what was the ground of that natural inſtinct which led all mankind to this way of worſhip; and withall how no ſacrifices could be of any force or efficacy, but with reſpect to that great ſacrifice, which was to be made for the ſins of all mankind in the perſon of Chriſt.

We ſee plainly, as the author to the Hebrews argues, that it is not poſſible that the blood of bulls, and of goats, ſhould take away ſin; there can be no reaſon for it in nature: Wherefore when he cometh into the world he ſaith, *ſacrifice and offering thou wouldſt not, but a body haſt thou prepared me*, (i. e.) God will accept of none of thoſe offerings as of a real atonement for ſin, but as they are ſignificative of the death of Chriſt; and therefore *a body haſt thou prepared*, (i. e.) therefore it is the decree and purpoſe of God, that Chriſt ſhall come into the fleſh, and by offering of himſelf, ſhall make ſuch atonement as thoſe ſacrifices could not do. *Then ſaid I, lo I come (in the volume of the book written of me) to do thy will O God*, (i. e.) therefore according to that good purpoſe of God, I come into the world to offer ſuch a ſacrifice as God will

will accept of. And thus revelation gives a clear solution of this first part of the difficulty; how atonement shall be made for the corruption of our natures, and those sins which are already committed, (i. e.) by a satisfaction in the person of Christ, who was by the good purpose of God appointed to this very thing, and who prepared himself such a sacrifice for the sins of men as he will accept of. SERM. XVII.

2d. Another thing to be done in order to the recovery of our corrupt natures, is the healing these infirmities and corruptions of ours: But how this was to be done they were wholly at a loss; and had not the least notion or glimpse of any help for human nature. It is true they generally thought that this recovery was to be effected by the practice of virtue; but how, or by what means or expedients mankind should become sincerely virtuous and good, who in their very natures were evil and corrupt, never entered into their minds to think of: Whereas upon supposition that men are naturally addicted to vice and wickedness, and their wills from the very first have a propensity to evil, which they all allowed; then it is wholly out of their own power ever to attain one virtue, or so much as desire it: For if the tendency of any thing be natural, there is nothing in the nature of that thing to alter it; and it must be something from without which can give the mind a new bias, and incline it a quite contrary way. Now, though from a principle of reason some help

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and aſſiſtance appears thus abſolutely neceſſary, yet they never thought of this; nor if they had, could they have told what would have been the effect.

But revelation hath opened the eyes of men, ſo that they now ſee clearly that ſome ſuch means is neceſſary; and the true reaſon of it is, becauſe we are conceived and born in ſin, and of ourſelves have no one inclination in our minds to goodneſs; ſo that we cannot ſo much as think a good thought.

And this means, as we are told in Scripture is the ſecret influence of the holy ſpirit of God upon our ſouls, inclining our wills to good, which are in themſelves free, and therefore can never be made virtuous and holy by force or compulſion; the renewing of our ſinful corrupt natures, by ſtrengthning and aſſiſting our infirmities; helping us to contradict, and ſuppreſs, and extinguiſh all our vitious inclinations; giving us grace and ſtrength in proportion to our difficulties; and working in us both to will and to do according to his good pleaſure: Inſomuch that by the power and efficacy of his concurrence, we perfectly conquer and beat down the ſtrongeſt and moſt violent tendencies both of body and mind: And this aſſiſtance, we learn, is purchaſed for us by the merits of that ſacrifice by which we are reconciled to God, which otherwiſe could never have been afforded us.

But perhaps it may be thought that the Heathens, even in a ſtate of nature, arrived to great

great degrees of ſome virtues; it is true they did, but not without ſome degree of the divine aſſiſtance. It is not improbable, that they had a ſhare of this unſeen operation of the ſpirit, though they knew nothing of it; as they will partake of the merits and ſatisfaction of Chriſt, though they never heard of him, if their lives were ſuitable to that natural ſenſe of moral, good, and evil: But I ſhall defer the further conſideration of this ſubject to the next opportunity. SERM. XVIII.

SERMON XIX.

Senſe of Religion more obſervable in the middle and meaner rank of People.

MAT. xi. 25.

I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes.

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IN a former diſcourſe upon this text, after I had ſhewn the occaſion of it, and the force of our Saviour's diſcourſe, concerning John the Baptiſt in this chapter; and how he ſhewed the Jews acted in contradiction both to themſelves and John the Baptiſt, in not receiving himſelf for the Meſſias. I told you my deſign from it was to remove one great prejudice, which ſeemed to lye fairly againſt the chriſtian religion; namely, that it hath been generally received by mean and illiterate ſort of

of people. And in order to this, the method I laid down for my discourses on this text was, SERM. XIX.

1. To be a little more particular in shewing the truth of this saying of our blessed Saviour's.

2. To consider the reasons of this, and where the true cause of it lies.

3. To shew where the great wisdom of God appears in this manner of dispensation.

4. And lastly to draw some inferences from the whole, and make some application of it to the two different sorts of people mentioned in my text.

As to the first of these, I shewed how the Gospel came particularly directed and recommended to the meaner sort of people; and how it spoke of the rich, and great, and wise men of this world with much diffidence, as if there were very little hopes of their conversion and effectual reformation.

As to the second, before I came to enquire what were the true reasons of this, I was to shew, that it is not any want of reasonableness in revealed religion that occasions the disesteem of it in the opinion of the wise and great men of the world, and makes it more easily entertained by the plainer part of mankind.

And in order to this, to shew that christianity is agreeable to the strictest and most refined reason of men; the best way I could think of was to suppose our selves in a state of nature, the very condition the enemies of revelation are bringing us to as fast as they can;

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and then to conſider what things mankind could wiſh to be reſolved in, and what are the matters of greateſt concernment to us, about which we ſhould be moſt inquiſitive? And to compare the account we have of them from revelation, with thoſe we have from the wiſeſt heathens: And they are theſe.

1. How we came to be, and what ſort of being we are, and what we were made for.

2. How mankind came to be corrupted, and in this miſerable condition of infirmity.

3. What cure can be found for this corruption of our natures, and to reſtore us to our health both of body and mind.

4. Whether there be another life after this.

5. What ſhall be the reward of virtue and the puniſhment of vice.

6. What ſort of government there is in the univerſe.

As to the firſt of theſe, I laid before you the ſeveral ſolutions we have received of this matter from the wiſeſt men of the heathen world; and the ſeveral accounts they gave of the origin of mankind: As likewiſe, that we have received from the holy ſcriptures; wherefore I ſhall now proceed to the

IV. The fourth queſtion of greateſt concernment to mankind, and a doubt which naturally ariſes in the minds of all men is, whether there be another life after this? To this enquiry all men have been ever led, not by meer curioſity, as if it were matter of ſpeculation

lation only; but as to a matter on which de- SERM. pended their greateſt and moſt important in- XIX. tereſt; for all the heathen world have agreed, that if there be another life after this, the alteration muſt be much for the better or the worſe; and men muſt needs be much more miſerable, or much more happy than they are in their preſent ſtate: And yet they were ſtrangely divided in their opinions about it, and could come to no fixt and ſettled reſolution of this queſtion. Many of the Philoſophers held there was no life after this; the epicureans were of opinion that there was a diſſolution of the whole man at his death, and that he ſhould never come into being again; unleſs in the courſe of numberleſs ages, the ſcattered particles of his frame ſhould be huddled together again, by ſuch another lucky chance as united them at firſt. Nay even of thoſe who allowed the creation of man by a ſuperior power, many thought they came into the world to dye like beaſts; and though they were great admirers of virtue, yet for this reaſon they made it its own reward; and uſed no other motives to encourage men to be virtuous than the innate excellency of virtue itſelf.

And of thoſe who were inclined to believe a future ſtate, none of them allowed it for the body; they all unanimouſly agreed that, this was never to live again; for it could never enter into their heads, that any power ſhould be able to bring together again into one, the ſcattered duſt of the body; and therefore they

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allowed the ſoul only to be immortal: So that this alone ſhould partake of the happineſs or miſery of another life.

This was the utmoſt they could arrive to by the light of nature, inſomuch that none of them ever ſuſpected the reſurrection of the body to another life. But our revealed religion hath brought the life and immortality of the body as well as the ſoul to light; and gives us this plain and full account of this great and important queſtion: Namely, that *at the end of the world there ſhall be a general reſurrection of all the bodies of men; that the trump of God ſhall ſound, and that all that are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of God; and all ſhall come forth, they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the reſurrection of damnation.* And it was the proſpect of this occaſioned that ſaying of Job's, *I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the latter day upon the earth: And though worms deſtroy this body, yet in my fleſh ſhall I ſee God, whom I ſhall ſee for my ſelf, and mine eyes ſhall behold and not another.*

Nor do we learn by revelation only that the bodies of men ſhall riſe, but that they ſhall undergo a great alteration, and receive a great improvement. *Though it be ſown in corruption, yet it ſhall be raiſed in incorruption; it is ſown a natural body, but it ſhall be raiſed a ſpiritual one. So that this corruption ſhall put on incorruption; and this mortal ſhall put on*

on immortality. And again, *that though all men shall not dye, yet all shall be changed*; and that this shall be effected in the twinkling of an eye, by the almighty power of God; who is as able to do all this, as he was to make us at first; and hath given sufficient proof of his power in raising up our Saviour from the dead, who is therefore called *the resurrection and first fruits of them that slept.* SERM. XIX.

5. Another enquiry of the highest concernment to mankind is, what shall be the reward of virtue in another life, and the punishment of vice; and what shall be the different state and condition of good and bad people in another world. As to this they all allowed, as it was very natural for them to do, that there were different mansions for the souls of good and wicked people; and accordingly they called one by the name of *Elysium*, and the other *Tartarus*, placed as they imagined in the confines of one another, both of them below; so that they imagined that the souls of all went downwards, and none went upwards to heaven, but such as were admitted into the number of their Gods. And they found out such rewards and punishments as were fitter to make diversion, than to be any real encouragement to virtue, and to deter men from vice.

As to the rewards, they never thought of any beyond the sensual pleasures of this life: Every one was apt to fancy the happiness of another world to be, whatever pleased him

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moſt in this life; ſuch as pleaſant meats, and drinks, and women, and walks, and ſpacious gardens and palaces: And it was no wonder that they could think of nothing better for themſelves, when this was the only happineſs they allowed their Gods.

And then as to the puniſhments they found out for the ſouls of men in another world, they were odd and ridiculous; ſuch as rolling a great ſtone from the bottom of a hill to the top, which tumbling down again ſhould perpetually renew the labour; the carrying water in a ſieve; and that of Tantalus placed up to the chin in water, and many the like witty fancies. Theſe were the reſult of all the wiſdom of the Grecians and the Romans concerning this matter; which were the moſt refined and poliſhed parts of the heathen world; and therefore muſt be ſuppoſed to have gone as far in the knowledge of this important queſtion, as human reaſon can reach; and therefore I omit the ridiculous notions of the Americans and Mahometans, and other illiterate and barbarous parts of the world, concerning the future conditions of men.

But the account revealed religion gives us of the reward of men in another world is, that it will not conſiſt in the pleaſures of ſenſe, but is ſomething beyond all that we can think, or ſpeak, or enjoy at preſent, it is *what eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard; nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive what the pleaſures of another life are.* And therefore we muſt have

have all the faculties of our ſouls and bodies improved and enlarged before we can know what they are, or ſhall be able to enjoy them; but we are told that they will conſiſt in the knowledge and love of God, and the bleſt ſociety of thoſe glorious beings that attend his throne. SERM. XIX.

And on the contrary it repreſents the miſeries of the damned to us, by that *of everlaſting burnings in a lake of fire and brimſtone, by the worm that ſhall never dye*; by which is ſignified the ſtings and remorſe of guilty conſcience, and by eternal ſeparation from the preſence of God, which is the only ſource and fountain of happineſs and perfection. So that eternal life ſhall be given to all thoſe who, by continuance in well doing *ſeek for glory and honour, and immortality*; *but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil.*

And as they knew nothing of the reſurrection of the body, ſo they never thought of a general judgment of all the world at once, which is every way neceſſary for the manifeſtation of the glory and juſtice of God; yet they never once ſuſpected any thing of it, but appointed ſeveral judges of hell, who were to judge and try the ſouls of men as they departed out of this life; and it is the Goſpel alone which hath diſcovered to us the great day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; that day wherein God hath appointed to judge the world in righteouſneſs, and wherein the

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the ſon of God ſhall come in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory; that before him ſhall all nations be gathered; that his angels ſhall ſeparate the good from the bad; and laſtly that he ſhall acquit the righteous, and pronounce an irreverſible ſentence of eternal condemnation upon the wicked.

6. The laſt great enquiry I ſhall now mention, which is of greateſt concernment for mankind to be reſolved in is, what ſort of government there is in the univerſe; nothing is more neceſſary to quiet the minds of men; and without ſome ſatisfaction in this, they are left in endleſs uncertainty and diſtraction; and yet how far were the wiſeſt Heathens from giving any ſatisfactory account of this. The Epicureans attributed all to chance, and allowed no intelligent being at all to be concerned in the government of the univerſe; and therefore his Gods were ſaid to be placed in the void ſpaces between his worlds, as being wholly uſeleſs in them.

The ſtoicks attributed the whole ſeries of all events to ſome ſtrange fatal neceſſity, though they could not tell where it took its riſe, nor what it was that made this neceſſity. The want of ſome reaſonable account of this great queſtion was that which made them multiply their Deities; ſo that they had a God for every element, for every country and city, nay for every diſeaſe and misfortune. And all the heathen world were ſo much in the dark, concerning this matter, that it was ordinary for

for them to ſet up one Deity in oppoſition to another, to make them claſh and quarrel, and diſpute one another's dominion after the manner of petty Princes among men. SERM. XIX.

But it is revealed religion alone that hath clearly diſcovered to us the ſovereignty of one abſolute univerſal power, wholly independant of all other, and ſole manager and diſpoſer of all things, who is infinite in power, and wiſdom, and goodneſs; who created, preſerves, and governs all things; who is the fountain of all perfection, and from whom alone every good and perfect gift cometh; whoſe kingdom ruleth over all, whoſe mercy is over all his works, and who governs all things both in heaven and earth: and we are told that his providence is ſo particularly and immediately concerned in the management of the affairs of this world, *that a ſparrow cannot fall to the ground without him*; *and that the very hairs of our heads are numbred:* Therefore he is repreſented to us as omnipreſent and filling heaven and earth; a deſcription of which David gives us in the 139th Pſalm, in a ſtrain of eloquence beyond any thing that ever entered into the head or heart of a heathen.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it; whither then ſhall I go from thy ſpirit, and whither ſhall I go then from thy preſence? If I climb up into heaven thou art there; if I go down into hell thou art there alſo; if I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea, even

SERM. XIX. *even there alſo thy hand ſhall lead me and thy right hand ſhall hold me: If I ſay the darkneſs ſhall cover me, then ſhall my night be turned into day, for the darkneſs and light to thee are both alike.*

Having thus laid before you the accounts from revealed religion of theſe important queſtions, together with the beſt ſolutions we have of them from the wiſeſt of thoſe men, who were void of all revelation, I ſhall at preſent only make two or three inferences from what hath been ſaid.

1. And the firſt thing I ſhall obſerve to you from hence is, the great improvement revealed religion is in point of knowledge, and what light it gives us into matters of pure ſpeculation; not to ſay any thing now of thoſe practical points which are directly conſequent to them: So that it hath given us a clear and open view of things, in which the wiſeſt of men without it had no notion at all, or at leaſt but very rude and imperfect gueſſes; they knew thoſe were the things which ought to take up their thoughts, and that there is no concernment in this world of ſuch conſequence as the being reſolved in them; they were ſenſible they had not this knowledge in themſelves, and yet they knew not where to look for it, and therefore were forced to take up with thoſe odd inventions and extravagant fancies which they made a ſhift with inſtead of the truth.

But

But revelation hath given us such a resolu- SERM. tion of these important questions as any rea- XIX. sonable man may acquiesce in, so as to look no farther, but rest satisfied in the account we have of these points, which are the very things that are said to be hid from *the wise and prudent, and revealed unto Babes.*

These matters which lay so far out of the reach of the greatest Philosophers, and puzled all the learning and wisdom of the heathen world, are now brought down to the capacities of all men. In those days, (speaking of the times of the Gospel) saith the Lord, *I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts, and they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, for they shall all know me from the greatest even to the least*; which is so literally verified, that by the light of the Gospel all these important truths are made so plain that they are become obvious and easy to the common sense and reason of men; so that a mean illiterate person knows more of these things, and hath a larger prospect and clearer insight into them, than the greatest wits and most learned men of the heathen world.

As far as they are necessary for us we know nothing better, and now they are discovered to us we know they are true, for truth always carries along with it an evidence to distinguish it from error, and such infallible marks of its divinity, that men always know

SERM. XIX. know it to be ſo when ever they light upon it; ſo that we need not now complain for want of neceſſary knowledge of theſe matters, and ſay, *who ſhall go up for us into heaven and bring it down to us, for the word is nigh unto thee in thy mouth and thy heart, that thou mighteſt know them*; we require no new revelation for them, nor exact elaborate ſkill in arts and ſciences; they are made plain and intelligible to every capacity, and fall in ſo eaſily with the innate ſenſe of mens minds that they ſeem to be born with them, and nothing but prejudice and wilful cloſing of their eyes can hinder men from ſeeing them.

2. I ſhall obſerve to you from hence the tendency that revealed religion only hath to procure peace and tranquillity to the minds of men: If theſe things were matters of ſpeculation only, the want of a competent knowledge in them need not give us any great diſturbance; but when our life is in them, and the welfare of body and ſoul both now and forever depends upon them, then nothing can make us eaſy and ſatisfied but what gives us a reaſonable account of theſe things; and yet where is it out of revelation that this is to be had? What religion in the world can give any reaſonable account of any one of theſe ſix points? Whereas the Goſpel gives us full ſatisfaction in them all, ſo as to convince the reaſon of any unprejudiced man, that he may now come to a reſolution with himſelf and know

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in what to acquiesce: This shews him a solid foundation for his hopes and fears, so as that he is not carried to and fro with delusion and the suggestions of his own or other peoples imaginations. SERM. XIX.

So that we have now such a religion as all good and considering men would bewail the want of if they were without it, and there is nothing they would make such strict enquiry after; and when a man had let his thoughts range and wander as far as possibly they could, the result of all his wishes would be, that some kind superior being would reveal to him just such a religion as this is, which should enlighten his mind, and give him a reasonable satisfactory answer to all those important questions, upon the knowledge of which the eternal well-being of mankind depended, and discover those truths which alone are answerable to all the straits and exigencies, all the wishes and desires of human nature.

Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards; the condition of our nature is such that our minds are full of ignorance and error, and especially in those things which concern us most; we are surrounded with weaknesses and infirmities of body; we are subject to many evils and calamities both within and without; and all these miseries follow our being by the same natural necessity that the sparks fly upwards: So that of ourselves, and in a state of nature, we are the most helpless creatures

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creatures in the world, and without revelation man had neither known the utmoſt of his miſery, from whence it came, nor how to remove it; whereas the Goſpel hath done all this for us, and is calculated to give us help and comfort under all theſe diſtractions of the mind and miſeries that attend the body.

While men are in health and proſperity they may ſeem to have no full conviction of the truth of theſe relations, but when they come to be under any great troubles or diſtractions of mind, or groan under the anguiſh of bodily pains, and all the comforts of this world forſake them, then they feel the truth of this, how there is no other ſtay or confidence for mortal man to rely upon but what revelation affords us; nothing that can quiet his mind and give it perfect repoſe in the midſt of all the uncertainties and misfortunes that attend our preſent ſtate; and therefore it is when diſeaſes and afflictions bear hard upon men who have not placed their confidence in theſe truths, they are neceſſarily void of all relief and comfort, having quitted theſe there is no other foundation to build their hopes upon; theſe are the only ſecurity upon which a man can venture ſoul and body for ever; and finding nothing in this world beſides that can give them any hopes, they commonly go out of the world in ſullenneſs and ſtupidity, which paſſes with men of the ſame ſtrain for reſolution and greatneſs of mind.

But

But the truths of revelation ſtick by a man to the laſt, they do not forſake him in diſtreſs, but are always at hand when he hath moſt need of them; they do not vaniſh by degrees and ſteal away from us, but clear up when we are leaving the world. So that under the ſoreſt tryals that man can undergo, we can poſſeſs our ſouls in patience, and rejoyce in hopes of the glory of God; and even under the pangs of death, we can look up and delight ourſelves with that raviſhing proſpect of future happineſs, which all wiſe men of this world are blind to. So that I ſay, if a man were to ſit down and conſider what it is he would deſire or expect from a religion, and were left to chuſe one for himſelf, after he had racked his invention and called up all the doubts and anxieties that vex and diſquiet human nature, he would at laſt cloſe with this we have, as that alone which is able to remove them all, and give full ſatisfaction and reſt to his ſoul.

3. The laſt thing I ſhall obſerve from hence is, the unreaſonable folly of thoſe men who inſiſt altogether upon natural religion in oppoſition to revelation; it is not only wicked and impious towards God, but it is cruel and malicious towards men, becauſe they do what they can to deprive mankind of thoſe revealed truths by which alone a wiſe and conſiderate man would willingly ſtand or fall; they take away the only help and remedy there is for

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the ignorance and infirmities of mankind, and leave the world wholly deſtitute of any reſolution of thoſe great queſtions, which are the neareſt concernments of us all; they endeavour to deſtroy and baniſh out of the world that revelation, which is the only means left us of information in thoſe things, without which we are in endleſs confuſion and uncertainty.

In this miſerable condition of ignorance and infirmity that we are now in, take away revelation, and then tell us whither we ſhall fly for the healing of our natures? For redreſs of all our grievances, for relief in all our miſeries, and comfort in all our afflictions? Where is it that we can find true conſolation in the worſt of circumſtances, and what can ſupport the ſinking and deſpondencies of a perplext and troubled ſoul? And in a word, what is there beſides revelation can convince us that we are not born to be miſerable for ever?

What therefore can be more injurious to the whole race of men, than to deprive them of that light which ſhews them what they were, what they now are, and what they ſhall be hereafter; which furniſhes mankind with a remedy for all the evils of his nature; ſupplies all his defects; anſwers all his doubts; ſhews him where to place his affections, what to ſhun and avoid, and what to aſpire to? And without which all mankind were left in a moſt deſperate and deplorable condition.

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The knowledge of these truths so clearly revealed to us in the Gospel, is so necessary for the ease, and comfort, and satisfaction of all men, and so conducive to the common good and welfare of all mankind, that a wise man would grieve to part with them; and would be heartily sorry they should be false, because he is sure no other account of them in this world can be true: And that we have some account of them is absolutely necessary both for our comfort here, and happiness hereafter; and therefore herein they are utterly inexcusable, because they would take away these accounts we have, and substitute no other in their room. SERM. XIX.

For them to tell us we need no satisfaction, when we find ourselves grievous offenders, and have such a load of guilt upon us, is to leave us over head and ears in debt without a possibility of discharging it; and to tell us that we want no grace or spiritual assistance, is to leave our whole nature in a sick languishing condition without any cure or help, upon this groundless presumption, that nature is able to work off the disease of itself: And lastly, to tell us that we want no information of these great truths from revelation, is to contradict the experience of the whole heathen world before they had any.

And therefore it is but a reasonable request to these men, that they would lay down some other principles or scheme of reason that shall answer all these ends, and give more satisfac-

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tion in all theſe points, and bid fairer for the belief and acceptance of any reaſonable man; nay that they themſelves would rather truſt to and confide in: When they do this, we will quit all revelation and go over to them; but till then let them leave us in the quiet poſſeſſion of what we have already. But we are very ſure the world cannot afford any other reaſonable or probable hypotheſis, which ſhall carry us through all theſe doubts and difficulties, and not leave a juſt ſcruple in any thing wherein our eternal well-being is concerned. Alas! what is there in nature that can reſtore us, what remedy can be found of force and efficacy enough to heal all the wounds of our bruiſed nature, and reſtore ſuch miſcreants to the favour of God; if there be, let them ſhew it us; if not, why will they diſown the neceſſity of ſupernatural means procured for us, and applyed by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt the great phyſician of our ſouls.

Have we not a great deal of reaſon to complain of theſe men, for thus ſtriking at that foundation which is the only one human nature hath to build upon, and depriving us of that revelation from whence we have all that information which a reaſonable man can truſt to? Let them rob us of all worldly ſubſtance, ſo as to leave us deſtitute and naked; nay, let them have life and all, and our chriſtianity teaches us to forgive them: But let them not take away our faith, and our hope, and ſtrip us of all thoſe ſacred truths which alone can fill

fill the mind with ſolid joy and comfort, and overcome all anxiety and trouble; and fix all the paſſions of our ſouls upon the greateſt and moſt ſubſtantial good ſo firmly, that all the powers of hell and death cannot ſhake us. Theſe things which they thus deſpiſe we acknowledge to be the depths of the wiſdom of God; and therefore we bleſs his holy name, who by the revelation of theſe truths to us, hath begotten us to a lively hope; and may we all have grace to ſhew forth his praiſe who hath thus called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light. SERM. XIX.

SERMON XX.

Senſe of Religion more obſervable in the middle and meaner rank of People.

MAT. xi. 25.

I thank thee O Father Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes.

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AND thus I hope it hath ſufficiently appeared, that it is not any want of reaſonableneſs in revealed religion, that is the true cauſe of its being not received ſo heartily and readily by the *wiſe* and *prudent* men of this world; ſince all the wiſdom of the whole world beſides, is not able to ſupply us with any ſatisfactory account of thoſe great queſtions, upon which depends the welfare of mankind.

This

This is such a clear and unconquerable evi- SERM. dence for the divinity and excellency of chri- XX. stianity, that one would think every considering person would embrace it greedily, and entertain it as the greatest blessing that ever was vouchsafed to human nature. So that the cause of infidelity is not in the religion, but in the men; and this saying of our Saviour's in my text, is not to be understood as if the Gospel were not calculated for the purest and most refined reason of men; and as if parts and learning were in themselves enemies to it, and rendered men indisposed for the reception of it. The case is so much otherwise, that this very thing will one day be an argument of endless confusion to all the *wise* and *prudent* men of the world, that they rejected those truths which were infinitely more agreeable to the purest reason, than those errors which they are zealous for; and which they would surely have entertained, if there were no temptation to the contrary, they are all the wisdom of God, and that must be agreeable to the truest wisdom of men.

And therefore now it is plain how God is said to hide these things from the *wise* and *prudent*, not as if he had ordained them purposely for ignorance and error, with design to impose upon the credulity of men, as if the Gospel were in truth a net to catch none but unwary and unthinking men, and could gain upon none but such as will be cheated into salvation: But because he hath made the nature

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of this light of the Goſpel ſuch, that men cannot ſee it through their prejudices. He hath ordered the matter ſo, that the plaineſt reaſon, and common underſtanding of men ſhall diſcern it eaſily, when the greateſt ſophiſtry and moſt intricate methods of human art or ſcience ſhall miſs it. So that the excellency of theſe truths ſhall appear in their juſt proportion to the naked eye, when all thoſe elaborate opticks which men of a longer reach and larger proſpect make uſe of, ſhall ſadly miſrepreſent and disfigure them: For which reaſon he declares that he ſpoke to the Jews in parables, *that ſeeing they might not ſee, and that hearing they might not underſtand:* Not as if it were the deſire of God it ſhould be ſo, purſuant to any eternal decree or purpoſe of his to reject them; for he would have all men be ſaved and come to the knowledge of the truth: But becauſe he would deliver the truths of the Goſpel after ſuch a manner, that an honeſt unprejudiced mind ſhould ſee them; when unſincerity and perverſeneſs ſhould be as a thick cloud over the eyes of men; for to what purpoſe ſhould they ſee that light of the Goſpel, whoſe vitious inclinations are ſo ſtrong that they will ſurely lead their lives in contradiction to it. So that the meaning of our Saviour is this, *I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt ordered theſe divine revelations after ſuch a manner, that a plain, honeſt, well meaning perſon is better diſpoſed for the reception of them, than the great, and wiſe,*

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and cunning men of the world: So that it is not the imperfection, but the excellence of christianity is the occasion of this; and it is not any want of power in men to see this, but their prejudices that will damn them. SERM. XX.

And therefore now I shall proceed to shew what those prejudices are, and what are the true reasons of this saying of our Saviour's. And accordingly,

1. The first reason why the *wise* and *prudent* men of this world are blind to the truths of revelation is, because of that haughtiness and vanity of spirit which goes along with all worldly knowledge; there is a pride that is almost inseparable from it, which makes people positive, and so to abound in their own sense of things, that they disdain every thing that is not agreeable to those principles they have once entertained; this we derived from the old Serpent, and had it in exchange for our innocence.

This is the very root and first cause of error in the minds of all those who are otherwise of good sense and understanding; men of such quick parts and sharpness, that there is no imposing upon them in a matter of their private worldly concerns; yet when they think or speak any thing with relation to another world, and to those matters which are the great, and common, and eternal interest of mankind; they reason so loosely and incoherently, and make such wide and foolish inferences, as if they

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they were void of the ordinary underſtanding of men.

But the bottom of this is the pride of mens hearts, and the true cauſe of all that oppoſition given to revealed religion, is the great opinion they have of their own ſtock of knowledge: So that in truth all that contend for natural religion, and oppoſe reaſon to revelation, do plainly ſet up the wiſdom of men in contradiction to the wiſdom of God; it is as if they would not be beholden to him for a religion, and would have one of their own or none at all.

But the great blindneſs of theſe men is diſcernible in nothing more than in this, that they ſet up revelation in oppoſition to itſelf, and do not know that they do ſo; they oppoſe it with its own weapons, and ſet up one part of it againſt another: For what they call *natural* religion, is in truth *revealed*. They think that the knowledge they have now of theſe ſix points, which are the great concernments of mankind, is from *reaſon*; whereas I have ſhewn that not one of them is ſo, and that we muſt have had them from revelation or not at all: Nor without revelation could they have that clear notion of all thoſe practical duties which are conſequent to them; and yet reaſon muſt be all in every thing with them, when it is plain it cannot give us a ſatisfactory account of any one of thoſe great truths, upon which, by their own confeſſion, the well-being of all mankind depends for ever: So that they had

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as good ſay they ſee with their eyes, and not by the light of the ſun. But they would rather be beholden to any thing for this knowledge than the Goſpel; and they will not own that benefit and improvement of knowledge they have received from it, though it is plain they could come by it no other way. They ſuſpect every thing that is not immediately from themſelves; and they doubt the truth of all revealed truths, becauſe they find them not within them; but have a ſtrange and prepoſterous jealouſy that God himſelf may delude them. And thus, as the ſon of Syrach ſays, *many are deceived by their own vain opinion, and an evil ſuſpicion hath overthrown their judgments.* SERM. XX.

And thus we ſee how the wiſdom and prudence of this world blinds the underſtandings of men, ſo that they cannot diſcern the excellency of the myſteries of chriſtianity, and the neceſſity of them in order to the ſalvation of our ſouls. Theſe notions of their own do ſo poſſeſs the heads and imaginations of men, that they find it very difficult to part with them, and be reconciled to any thing elſe.

The plaineſt reaſon of men is always the pureſt; and as far as men ſearch by ſtrength of reaſon alone into the depth of things, relating to another world, ſo far they ſtray from the truth; and when we come to another world, we ſhall find that moſt of that learning and knowledge which men are proud of here,

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was no other than dreams of their imagination, and cobwebs ſpun out of their own brain.

2. Becauſe of the oppoſition between the things of this world and the things of another, about which the underſtandings of men are employed; the nature of them is very different, ſo that men cannot be equally intent upon them both: For the mind of man is not made to look two ways at once any more than his eyes. So that he can no more let his thoughts dwell both upon the things of this world and another, than he can look upwards and downwards at the ſame time. And therefore, when the thoughts and inclinations of men are taken up with the things of this life, and full of the knowledge of the world, there is a ſort of natural neceſſity there ſhould be a neglect and contempt of all ſpiritual matters.

For we muſt conſider, that the knowledge of the doctrines of religion is a habit, as well as the practice of any of its precepts; and therefore when men will not accuſtom themſelves to the thinking much of religious matters, and that the whole current of their thoughts doth run another way, it is no wonder they are indiſpoſed for the things of another life, which are to be ſpiritually diſcerned; by which is not meant that any immediate infuſion of the ſpirit is required in order to this, but that it is neceſſary that men ſet their minds that way, by taking them off the eager purſuit of worldly knowledge; by diverting their reaſon and their imaginations from being fixt and intent upon worldly

worldly wiſdom and knowledge, that they may be imployed on ſpiritual matters; for otherwiſe they can never have a true knowledge of them, or be rightly affected with them. So that we need not wonder that people of ready parts and good underſtandings in other things, are ſhamefully ignorant in divine matters: It is for the ſame reaſon that they are ignorant of any other art or ſcience that they do not give their minds to. Men are now as little to expect ſudden inſpiration in the neceſſary knowledge of religion, as in the buſineſs of their trade or calling; they are to look for nothing more than the ordinary grace of God upon their endeavours. SERM. XX.

The knowledge and practice of religion requires thinking and obſervation, and that their reaſon and underſtanding be imployed about them with diligence and vigour: So that heaven is to be got as men get riches and worldly policy; they muſt make it their buſineſs, and ſet their minds to the work, and reſolve to acquire theſe by the ſame methods they do any other habit: And this they muſt do with the utmoſt ſtrength and reſolution of their ſouls; for as I obſerved before, the prevailing bent of our minds can be but one way at once.

3. Another reaſon of this ſaying of our Saviour's, as it reſpects the rich and great men of this world is, becauſe of the great force that the riches and ſplendor of this world have to blind mens eyes, and gain upon their affections.

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tions. Both the rich and poor, the mean and great, have many and ſtrong temptations; and at firſt thought, one would imagine thoſe of poverty, and a low condition in the world, to be the ſtrongeſt, and overcome with greateſt difficulty; and indeed they are ſo in themſelves. But that which makes the difference between theſe two conditions, in reſpect of their diſpoſition for the practice of virtue and holineſs, is the different nature of thoſe temptations which are incident to proſperity and adverſity: For though we ſhould allow the temptation of want and miſery to be the ſtronger, yet thoſe of wealth and proſperity are the more treacherous and ſubtiler, much more apt to gain upon us and have the advantage of the other ſeveral ways.

I. The temptations incident to a low condition come upon men with open force and commonly ruſh in all at once, and their greateſt violence is felt at firſt onſet. Now this awakens mens minds, and calls up all the powers of their ſouls; and if they have any ſpiritual ſtrength left they exert it vigorouſly; they are always upon their guard, and diſcern plainly every ſtep the temptation gains upon them. But the allurements of a proſperous ſtate inſinuate themſelves inſenſibly; they lay all our faculties aſleep, and ſteal in upon us before we are aware. We take them at firſt for friends and give them admittance; and we do not ſee our miſtake till they have us in bonds and fetters,

fetters, and such as we are not willing to be freed from. Fear and terror, pain and misery, do indeed ruffle and discompose the spirits of men, but they do not leave that deep impression upon the conscience; for we are apt to resist and struggle with them to the last: But the allurements of ease and pleasure gain upon us by those inclinations that are most intimate to our nature, and make their way through our hearts; which difference of the temptations that assault us in our way to heaven, is well represented in the fable, by the contest between the sun and the wind, which should have the greatest force and influence upon the traveller; the gradual heat and warmth of the sun brought to pass effectually, what the ruder violence of the wind could not effect. And thus it is with the sunshine of prosperity, it dissolves all the powers of our souls, it enervates and breaks the strength of all our resolutions, and too commonly leaves us nothing but faint and languishing desires of virtue and goodness, just enough to keep us in a good opinion of it, but not to influence us strongly to the practice of it. SERM. XX.

2. Another great disadvantage of a wealthy and prosperous state is, that it supplies all the sinful inclinations of our natures with objects to gratify them; want of opportunity hath kept thousands in innocence, which from thence hath been improved into solid virtue and holiness. But riches and honours supply men

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men with fewel for all their luſts; they lay before us all the allurements of this world, and ply all our vitious inclinations inceſſantly, and give us opportunities for indulging them all; they beſet us round with temptations, and ſtraw gins and traps in our way; ſo that we meet them at every turn, and it is impoſſible for man with his ordinary ſtrength to be ſo perpetually on his guard, as to contradict and overcome them all.

3. Another thing which makes the charms of eaſe and plenty ſo unconquerable, is the tendency they have to gain upon our affections. We have a natural abhorrence of thoſe things which are any way the occaſion of pain or grief to us, and it is eaſy to ſet ourſelves againſt them when they would draw us into ſin: But when temptations are agreeable to the inward inclinations of body and mind, and are apt to engage all our affections, and take faſt hold of all our paſſions, it is very hard to ſhake them off; they cling about us and kill us with a preposterous fondneſs; they blind our underſtandings and deprave our judgments, ſo as to carry our reaſon along with them into all manner of ſin: And when once they have brought us into a love of the world, (which they ſeldom fail to do) then the love of God and religion is not in us, (i. e.) they take away all juſt regard to the ſervice of God and the preſervation of a good conſcience: This is the reaſon of our Saviour's ſaying *that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven,*

(i. e.)

(i, e.) as he himſelf explains it for them that truſt in riches; but this makes it a little eaſier only in appearance, becauſe it is hard for them not to truſt in their riches: It is the moſt unlikely thing in the world, that a rich man ſhould not in a great degree place his confidence in his riches, and reſt upon them; and it is very hard for him to conquer or avoid thoſe temptations which they neceſſarily bring upon him; it is very rare they do not ſet their hearts upon them, *for where their treaſure is there will their hearts be alſo*: Therefore we are often warned in ſcripture againſt this love of the world, and bid to ſet our hearts on things above, and not to be conformable to this world; but that we ſhould be transformed in the renewing of our minds. SERM. XX.

4. The laſt thing which renders the temptations of a wealthy and proſperous condition ſo dangerous, beyond that of a lower rank, is the tendency it hath to make men thoughtleſs of another world. Neceſſity and want, and all manner of afflictions are apt to make men think and reflect; they wean them from all the pleaſures of this life, and put them upon thinking of another world; but plenty and eaſe make people careleſs and negligent; they divert all thoughts of death and judgment, and of that endleſs ſtate of happineſs or miſery that is to follow them. In troubles and afflictions all men are apt to call upon God, and apply themſelves for mercy and aſſiſtance; but in their proſperity they forget him, and them-

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ſelves too; as it is repreſented by our Saviour in the caſe of the rich man in the Goſpel, whoſe thoughts were all taken up in the management of his ſtores, that he had no leiſure to conſider of the time when his ſoul ſhould be required of him. This is a very general caſe among us, and it is ordinary to ſee people ſo intent and eager upon getting of wealth, that they are ever in a perpetual hurry, and in a reſtleſs greedy purſuit of it: So that every thing is time loſt that doth not ſome way promote their worldly intereſt. Theſe are the very men in the parable, who being invited to the wedding ſupper, had no leiſure to come and pay their attendance: And therefore the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind were invited in; thoſe who had nothing elſe to do, and ſo little worldly buſineſs, that they could not tell how to diſpoſe of themſelves.

And thus we ſee how poverty and a low condition are often the greateſt mercies in this world, as being a means to diſpoſe men for virtue and holineſs: So that riches and honours are ſo often a curſe upon thoſe who have them, that it is not eaſy to tell when they are not ſo. And this brings me to the third thing I propoſed, which was,

3. To ſhew wherein the wiſdom of God appears, in propoſing the truths of the Goſpel to men after ſuch a manner, that they ſhould be hidden from the *great* and *prudent* men of this world, and be revealed unto *Babes*. This would

would appear very plainly if I had but time to shew at large, how it could not have been otherwise from the present condition of our infirmity, and the nature of those things which go to make up the body of a religion if they will have any; and how they must live a life of faith, if they will have any religion at all. But I shall at present give you only one obvious reason, which abundantly justifies the wisdom and goodness of God in this manner of dispensation, and that is, SERM. XX.

That if the Gospel was not thus contrived, it had not been a religion for all the world; the revelations of God were designed for the salvation of all men, and therefore they must have been adapted to all sorts and conditions, to all ages, sexes, and degrees of men; that which was designed for all men must have been plain, and obvious, and intelligible to the most natural reason of a man; and therefore those wise men of the world, who are apt to despise it for being so, must necessarily loose the benefit and advantage of it. Had God given us a religion which was dark and abstruse, made up of science and demonstration, and that sort of evidence and worldly wisdom which the Greeks sought after formerly, and our modern opposers of revelation require from us now; it had been a religion but for a very small number of men: For very few even of those who insist upon this are capable of understanding it rightly if they had it. Had God given us a religion made up of close ar-

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gument, and ſuch a chain of conſequences as in thoſe ſciences which are the inventions of men, how few would have been the better for it? And how would the greater part of mankind, which are the beſt diſpoſed for virtue and piety, been totally excluded; and no one would have been qualified for it, but the wiſe men of this world.

There is no reſpect of perſons with God; and they are ſtrangely miſtaken in thinking that he muſt value the wiſdom and the knowledge of this world in the ſame proportion that we do. Alas! our wiſdom is as trifling and inſignificant to him as our riches, which are only thick clay; and we make a very falſe judgment, when we fancy God muſt take the methods of our ſyſtems in his revelations, and go about to prove to us by lines and figures that we ſtand in need of a ſatisfaction, when we find ourſelves grievous offenders; or that we ſtand in need of ſome ſupernatural aſſiſtance, when we find ourſelves unable for the practice of virtue and holineſs; that there are three perſons in the Godhead; that there are endleſs joys for good men, and everlaſting torments for the damned in another world: had he done any thing of this nature, we might juſtly have ſuſpected it for the invention of men; but by this method children could not have attained to an early knowledge of religion, and ſo the time for improvement in what was to qualify them for heaven would have been ſhortned.

But

But the design of God in his revelations was the saving of souls, and not gratifying the curiosity and pleasing the imaginations of men; our religion is for practice and not speculation, and therefore it was requisite it should be made up of such truths as are intelligible to every capacity; such as fall in with the plainest reason and most natural sentiments of men; that the most ignorant might be capable of them, and the wise and prudent left inexcusable, and exposed to a just condemnation for overlooking and despising of them. SERM. XX.

Having thus gone through what I designed from the words, I should proceed to make some inferences from what hath been said; but the time not permitting me, I shall only make some application in short to the two different sorts of people mentioned in my text. And,

I. To the first sort I shall give St. Paul's advice, that *they become fools that they may be wise*; this is a precept peculiar indeed to christianity, but hath a signification beyond all the wisdom of the heathens; and the meaning is, that they have a more moderate opinion of that knowledge and wisdom that is so much esteemed among men, and employed about the perishing things of this world; and bend their thoughts towards those things which concern the future well-being of soul and body for ever; this is every where in scripture called *wisdom*, in opposition to the learning, and prudence, and cunning that is so much admired in temporal

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affairs; and the reaſon of it is, becauſe how ſharp, and cunning, and prudent, how wiſe and learned ſoever men are in the things of this world, it all dies and periſhes with them; they leave it all behind them, and it will be of as little uſe to them then as their money. But the knowledge of thoſe truths which are the great concernments of our ſouls, follows them into another world.

True wiſdom conſiſts in forecaſt, and the greateſt point of it is for men to provide for the worſt; he is the wiſeſt man who looks fartheſt, and conſiders what things will end in, what will be the final iſſue of all worldly things, and what ſhall be his laſt ſtate and condition. And that is truly folly which leaves all this to a venture, and makes no proviſion againſt the evil day, but fixes all his thoughts upon the preſent, and is intent only upon the periſhing things of this world: This is folly or rather deſperate madneſs, and there is nothing on this ſide hell can expreſs it; it is as if a man were buſy in drawing a ſcheme when he is going to execution; or as if a perſon ſhould be ſollicitous about a dreſs, when the houſe is all on fire about him; and imploy all his thoughts only that he might be burnt in a gawdy garb.

II. But ſecondly, as to thoſe who are *Babes* in the ſenſe of the text, to whom theſe things of ſalvation are ſaid to be revealed, let them not be diſcouraged or perverted from the truth, becauſe they ſee it hath ſo little effect upon the

the rich, and great, and wise men of the world; and because that men of wit, and learning, and parts despise it, and expose our christian mysteries; let them not be dismayed as if it were a new or a strange thing; it was ever so from the first preaching of the Gospel, that these things were hid *from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto Babes:* It is the very nature of the Gospel, and it is the effect of infinite wisdom that it should be so. SERM. XX.

Nor need we wonder so much at the degeneracy of the age, and fancy immediately that the church of God must fail; for infidelity and atheism are the natural result of plenty and ease, and those who move in a higher sphere among men, were always most subject to impiety and prophaneſs, and a disregard to all religion; and it will be so to the end of the world: And he hath warned us of this beforehand, that we might not be staggered, and take any offence from thence or prejudice to christianity.

Though the preaching of the cross is *foolishneſs to them*, yet to us it is *the power of God.* Notwithstanding they endeavour to pervert our faith, and corrupt the Gospel both in their practice and conversation; yet these secrets of God shall be among them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant, and the truth of God shall prevail in the end; for God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent. Let us therefore, with our Saviour, here bless and

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magnify the holy name of God, that *he hath thus hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and revealed them unto Babes*; ſuch as are beſt qualified to be his children, and heirs of his glorious kingdom in heaven; that he hath not made any ſtock of worldly knowledge, or learning, or great quickneſs of parts and apprehenſion neceſſary to ſalvation; but a plain honeſt heart, and a ſincere induſtrious mind; that he hath not regard to the perſons of men in the revelations of his will, but had reſpect to the humble and meek, and made humility and ſincerity the only neceſſary qualifications for the reception of the Goſpel. Let this cheer up our ſpirits, and excite our diligence, and confirm our faith of all the myſteries of chriſtianity, in oppoſition to theſe men of the world; for when Chriſt ſhall deſtroy the *wiſdom* of the *wiſe*, bleſſed, ever bleſſed ſhall they be who are not offended in him.

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

The neceſſity of watching and praying.

MAT. xxvi. 41.

Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: The ſpirit indeed is willing but the fleſh is weak.

ALL men have ever had a great ſenſe of the corruption and weakneſs of human nature, and it is what hath ever ſufficiently been felt, and complained of, and bewailed; and the Devil hath in all ages made his advantages of it, giving men a formidable proſpect of the difficulty of virtue and holineſs, by ſubduing their luſts and vitious inclinations, and reſtraining all the evil tendencies of our nature: This hath never failed of its effect in thoſe who conſider this grievous infirmity without an eye to the mighty power and energy of thoſe means by which it is to be cured. SERM. XXI.

And

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And accordingly ſome looking on the reſtraint of their luſts to be a ſtrife againſt nature (as indeed it is) ceaſe all endeavour towards a good life, they quite give out; and then the only work they have left, is to take care that the thoughts of another world give their pleaſures as little intermiſſion and diſturbance as they can.

Others leſs hardy, but every jot as fooliſh, are always ſtruggling with their luſts, though not to any ſubſtantial purpoſe of religion; they live in hopes this weakneſs is incurable; this is their great ſupport and comfort in their ſins, and they have all along in their minds a ſtrange mixture of ſenſual pleaſure and remorſe; of luſt and godly ſorrow.

The laſt ſort of men, on whom the ſenſe of this infirmity hath a malignant influence, are thoſe who have ſet in earneſt upon the work with great ſincerity and vigour, with great courage and reſolution; and if the work were to be done of a ſudden, nothing would be too hard for them. But after ſome tryals, finding the work always new, they come off of this religious fury; and when theſe firſt warmths are abated they feel this weakneſs of the fleſh as much as ever: Theſe cannot be eaſy under the thoughts of damnation; and therefore though they are foiled and beaten back again, yet they are always beginning but ſeldom make any conſiderable progreſs.

Nay even in thoſe who have made conſiderable advances in piety and holineſs, this weakneſs

neſs of the fleſh often gives a check to their endeavours, it makes the work go on heavily and fills them with deſpondency; ſo that the conſideration of this weakneſs of human nature hath unhappily every conſequence but what it ſhould have in the minds of men, and that is to awaken them with a ſenſe of the danger they are in, and ſtir up their endeavours, and make them conſtant, and vigorous, and reſolute. SERM. XXI.

Our bleſſed Saviour, who had himſelf a feeling of our infirmities, in theſe words deſcribes moſt exactly wherein this weakneſs of our nature conſiſts, and the moſt effectual method of our cure. *The ſpirit is willing*, the difficulty doth not lye there, *but the fleſh is weak*; and for that reaſon we muſt *watch and pray that we enter not into temptation*, (i. e.) that we are not overcome by it. He ſaid this at a time when he himſelf was under the greateſt temptation and tryal that ever loaded any of the ſons of Adam. Watching and praying were the means he uſed himſelf and found effectual; theſe are what he recommended to his Diſciples then, when a great temptation was coming on them, and they failed for want of uſing them; and theſe are what he hath laid down for all ſucceeding chriſtians if ever they hope for ſucceſs. Without the uſe of theſe means our natural infirmities are never to be overcome; and on the contrary a right uſe of them will never fail: So that the words are no excuſe for ſin, but a powerful motive to ſubdue and overcome it.

My

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My buſineſs at preſent ſhall be to enlarge upon theſe two things contained in the text, being of the higheſt conſequence and neareſt concern to us: Namely, to conſider

1. The great frailty of our nature, wherein it conſiſts; and the great difficulty of attaining to any good degree of virtue, even after a full purpoſe and reſolution of the mind to endeavour it.

2. The true remedy for this weakneſs, and the great means by which we are to overcome and ſurmount this difficulty.

As to the firſt, in order to a more diſtinct knowledge of the frailty of human nature, it will be neceſſary to obſerve, that the ſcriptures do every where ſuppoſe two contrary principles within us interwoven in our frame, parts of our firſt make, and diſtinguiſhed in holy writ by the names of *fleſh* and *ſpirit*. The latter of which is that more refined and exalted part of us which derives its original from heaven, carries on it a ſtamp of the divine likeneſs; it is that immaterial, immortal part of us, whoſe firſt and innate tendencies were all to good, and all its inclinations to virtue and holineſs; and when it can act of itſelf it cannot help owning and acknowledging them. This is what the Apoſtle St. Paul 1 Cor. ii. 11. calls the *ſpirit of a man which is in him*, in diſtinction from the ſpirit of God in the verſe immediately preceding. And in Rom. vii. he calls the *law of his mind*.

Now

Now though this be in itſelf purely ſpiritual ever ready to own and acknowledge the excellencies of virtue and goodneſs, and in a diſpoſition made for the beauty of holineſs, to feel its charms, and be ever carried towards it by an inceſſant ſtrong propenſion; yet it is but a part of us, and ſince the fall and corruption of our nature, it is immerſed and ſunk in fleſh; to which, though it communicate life, and motion, and underſtanding, yet it cannot diffuſe its own native inclinations and deſires through the unweildy maſs which ſets up a great variety of luſts and appetites of its own in direct oppoſition to them; inſomuch that the pure ſpirit hath loſt all power of direction and government; and in a ſtate of nature its faculties are ſo broken and impaired, ſo overpowered and obſtructed, that of itſelf it is utterly unable to reſtrain any one irregular paſſion or appetite of the lower man, and exert itſelf to any good purpoſe by thought, word, or deed. SERM. XXI.

This wretched feeble condition of the mind of man is, that which hath made ſome help and aſſiſtance abſolutely neceſſary in order to its recovery; and that could be no other than the ſecret influence of the holy ſpirit of God upon this ſpirit of ours, which hath been uſed to be called by a particular emphaſis, the grace of God, becauſe it is the greateſt favour ever vouchſafed to mankind, and a purchaſe made for us by the blood of Chriſt.

This

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This inſpires the ſoul with new life and vigour; that ſame breath of God which gave it being, blows it into a flame; it ſtirs up the original tendencies of the mind, and fills it with new and freſh deſires of virtue and holineſs; and this is the beginning of a chriſtian life.

So that now we ſee how to underſtand diſtinctly what is meant by the ſpirit in thoſe many places of the new teſtament, where it is ſet in oppoſition to the fleſh, (i. e.) that ſpirit of a man that is in him thus newly animated and revived by the ſweet influences of the holy ſpirit of God. *The ſpirit indeed is willing*, (i. e.) the mind of man, wrought upon by the operations of God's holy ſpirit, is filled with good deſires and holy reſolutions; it is ſincere and forward, and apt to be fluſhed with great hopes and aſſurance of ſucceſs, and ready to encounter any temptation. And thus it is oppoſed to the fleſh, by which, both here and in other places of ſcripture, is meant not only this groſſer body of ours with all its fleſhly luſts and appetites; but the inferior ſoul which is the ſeat of our paſſions and affections, and all other corrupt deſires and vices of the mind, which hath been uſed both by Jews and Chriſtians to be expreſſed by the name of a third principle, reſulting from the union of the pure ſpirit with the body.

This is that part of us that is ſaid to be weak in the text, very weak indeed to all goodneſs, but violent and headſtrong to all manner of vice and wickedneſs; which natural condition of

of infirmity the holy ſcripture repreſents, by our being *ſhapen in iniquity, and conceived in ſin*; by having *every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts to evil continually*; they call it *the law of the members warring againſt the law of the mind and bringing it into captivity*, inſomuch that in this *fleſh dwelleth no good thing*. And with reſpect to religion we are ſaid to be in a ſtate of death, (i. e.) in a condition as unapt for the exerciſe of virtue and holineſs, as a dead body is for thoſe of life and motion. SERM. XXI.

After this, when the holy Ghoſt hath breathed into us a new principle of ſpiritual life, and that by God's preventing grace the mind is rouzed out of this lethargy, then begins the ſtruggle; the principles of reaſon and grace againſt the appetites and propenſions of nature; and then it is we begin to have a ſenſe and feeling of our weakneſs and the manifold infirmities of the fleſh. We are full of holy deſires and good reſolutions; we are daring and reſolute, very confident of ourſelves, and have a ſecret pleaſure and rejoycing as a *Giant that is to run his courſe*, having a full aſſurance of the victory.

We are apt then to fancy it will never be otherwiſe with us, and to think the work done before we have well begun it; this is commonly in the abſence of temptation, the firſt approaches of which ſhock and ſtagger all theſe reſolutions; and as it ſteals upon them by degrees, ſo they are all melted down into a compliance; inſomuch that it could not enter into

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into his thoughts that ever he ſhould be ſo baffled and overcome: Then when remorſe of conſcience, a ſcene of ſhame, and proſpect of damnation ſets him a thinking again, all his reſolutions are renewed; but the temptation returns again with the ſame ſucceſs, and quaſhes all thoſe good deſires and holy purpoſes of the mind: This is done frequently; and every defeat contributes to the impairing of our ſpiritual ſtrength, and breaking the powers of the mind; our deſires of goodneſs decay, our good purpoſes grow faint and languid, till at laſt we have only one reſolution left; namely, that we will reſolve to purpoſe ſome time or other.

This is the very ſtate of infirmity deſcribed in the text, which was occaſioned by a famous inſtance of the moſt ardent and forward zeal, and of the great infirmity and weakneſs of human nature; when Chriſt was to be apprehended and crucified, *though all men ſhall be offended becauſe of thee, yet will I never be offended*, ſays Peter, *though I ſhould dye with thee yet will I not deny thee*: Likewiſe alſo ſaid all his diſciples, yet there was not one that ſtood by him; and he that expreſſed himſelf with the moſt confidence of them all denied him thrice with oaths and proteſtations. Our bleſſed Saviour who had himſelf a ſenſe of this infirmity, and foreſaw what temptation was coming on them, adviſed them to the uſe of thoſe means which alone could enable them to overcome it, (i. e.) watching and

and praying: They however ſlept, *for their eyes were heavy*, and they fell ſhamefully. Their maſter put them both in practice and obtained a glorious victory over all the powers of hell. SERM. XXI.

And now we ſee what that work is that lies before us, the great buſineſs and employment of our lives. The fleſh is weak indeed, but it muſt be made ſtrong in a ſpiritual ſenſe. Nature muſt be overcome, and a ſecond nature introduced; all, even its moſt craving appetites muſt be left unſatisfied, and ſo frequently croſſed and diſappointed that they ſhall all be brought under the power of the mind, inſomuch that we ſhall be ready to pluck out an eye, to cut off a right hand, and remove from us that very darling temptation which hitherto hath been dearer to us than our ſouls and everlaſting felicity: Our very members muſt become inſtruments of righteouſneſs to God, and we muſt glorify God in our bodies; ſo that even they ſhall become *a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable to him.*

I ſhall now proceed to conſider the means laid down here for the doing of this; means that never yet failed of ſucceſs, where they were duly put in practice, and without which it is in vain ever to attempt the healing of a ſickly and corrupted nature. And therefore,

2dly. The great means, by which we are to ſurmount and overcome this difficulty, are here ſaid to be watching and praying.

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I. As to the firſt of them, that of watching againſt temptation, is a metaphor taken from the careful obſervance of an enemy or robber in the night, and being upon our guard that we might not be ſurpriſed by them and taken at a diſadvantage; it is a very general word, and doth more particularly imply, diligence and perſeverance.

By diligence I mean a ſincere and earneſt endeavour of virtue and holineſs, and of ſubduing all our fleſhly inclinations; that our heart be in the work, and that we do this with the full bent of the ſoul: So that we labour to carry on and improve our good reſolutions into a ſtaid and ſettled ſtate of holineſs; and do this with the ſame vigour and intenſeneſs of the mind that ſome purſue riches and honour, or any other worldly ends. It is a vain expectation of people, who think that the work of religion will go on ſmoothly without let or diſturbance, whenever they reſolve in earneſt to ſet about it; it hath been a miſtake fatal to the ſouls of many, who after they have begun well, and meeting with ſuch difficulty and uneaſineſs as they did not expect, in denying the vitious inclinations of the fleſh, and reſtraining their luſts they are beaten back and quite diſcouraged; and there is no thought ſo natural to ſuch beginners than, that when they reſolve indeed to be good and virtuous, they ſhall in ſome degree live a life of Angels, in undiſturbed innocence and tranquillity. The ſpirit of God foreſeeing the evil of this, hath

hath not more effectually endeavoured to remove any miſtake or error, to which the mind of man was ſubject than this; warning us of the difficulties we are to meet with in a chriſtian courſe, repreſenting it by the ſimilitudes of a *race*, a *journey*, a *warfare*, telling us that we wreſtle *not againſt fleſh and blood* only, *but againſt principalities and powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world*, (i. e.) againſt all the malice and ſubtilty of hell: And therefore adviſes us to put on the whole armour of God, and all little enough. SERM. XXI.

And accordingly, in the text we are bid to watch, (i. e.) to look for and expect uneaſineſs and difficulty. Eccl. ii. 1. *My ſon*, ſays the ſon of Syrach, *If thou come to ſerve the Lord, prepare thy ſoul for temptation:* It will certainly come upon you, and probably when you leaſt ſuſpect it, and are in the leaſt preparation for it; therefore ſit down firſt and conſult whether you are able, with ten thouſand, to meet him that comes againſt you with twenty thouſand; whether, with this willingneſs of the mind, and thoſe ſupplies of grace that are given you, you are able to encounter the world, the fleſh, and the devil. If you thus look for temptation, and ſet your mind into a poſture to receive it, and put your whole ſtrength to the work, you cannot fail of ſucceſs.

Virtue is indeed difficult, but it is neceſſary and practicable; and nothing need to be ſaid

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more for that on which eternal ſalvation depends.

The attaining any commendable degree of virtue and holineſs, will require conſtant application and inceſſant labour of the mind; this will ſhew what it can do, it will exerciſe all its power and moſt vigorous efforts: For this fleſh of ours *muſt be crucified with all its affections and luſts*, and we muſt *be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds*; the prevailing bent of our minds muſt be to piety and holineſs, and what it is to do this to any good purpoſe, they little know, who have not felt the trouble of it, and no one can be ſenſible what it is to become a truly good man but by the tryal; what pains he muſt take with himſelf in finding out all his corruptions and infirmities, that none of them might eſcape him; what nice obſervation of what virtues and graces he is yet without, and what advances he hath made in thoſe he hath; what unwearied care and watchfulneſs leſt he be any way brought under the power of temptation: Now to do this habitually, ſo as to keep up a ſenſe of holineſs in the mind, and preſerve a ſecret communion with God in the midſt of the buſineſs, and diverſions, and converſation of a ſinful world; *hic labor, hoc opus.* Let any man weigh this thoroughly and then tell me, whether this can be compaſſed on any eaſier terms, than having it ever uppermoſt in our thoughts, and making it the chief imployment of our lives.

The

The other thing intended by watching in the text I ſaid was perſeverance; we are not only to put our whole ſtrength to the work, but we muſt continue ſo to do without intermiſſion; and therefore here I muſt obviate another miſtake near allied to the former, but not the ſame; and that is, of thoſe who are indeed ſenſible of the difficulty of the work, but imagine that it is to be compleated of a ſudden, and that all the danger and difficulty will be ſoon over. And therefore, after they have gained ſome good degrees of religion, and perhaps done a great deal in a little time by a violent obſtinate reſolution, they are apt to fall into ſecurity and triumph too ſoon, not conſidering that they are but ſtill a beginning; for the breaking off from a courſe of ſin, and the improvement of every particular grace and virtue, into a ſettled ſtate and temper of the body and mind, are two very different things. The firſt may be done by help of a ſudden furious zeal, and the heat and fire of our imaginations; and ſo far it is very well; it doth great things while it holds, and it is a pity it cannot laſt; but nothing that is violent can do ſo; and therefore when theſe heats are expired, they muſt be ſupplied by conſideration, and judgment, and reflection; and after all, we ſhall find that cool and gentle reaſon is the greateſt friend of virtue, and the ſhrewdeſt enemy to vice. This doth not riſe and fall with the weather, or ebb and flow with the circulation of the blood, but will

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laſt as long as the temptation, and be ready to engage it at every turn.

The great ſtrength of temptation doth not lye in a ſudden violent onſet, and an open furious aſſault, this happens but in a few inſtances; but in the conſtancy and perpetuity of it: And herein is the great weakneſs of the fleſh, that its ſinful appetites are natural and permanent; ſo that it muſt be dealt with not as being ill of an acute diſeaſe, but as being of a crazy habit and infirm conſtitution, which is to be healed by variety and continued application of remedies, by diet, and phyſick, and uninterrupted regular management; and with all this it recovers but ſlowly, and it is a long time before it is brought to a firm athletick ſtate of health.

Now becauſe all our corruptions are natural to us, and all virtue and goodneſs is acquired, there is no way of overcoming nature but by cuſtom and habit. For want of weighing this thoroughly, many a reſolute and ſincere chriſtian hath been cut off ſhort in his progreſs, and hath fallen from the faireſt hopes into the depth of deſpondency; whereas he had nothing more to do but to perſevere, and though he could not be ſenſible of any ground he gained, yet to go on and be always doing. Though he is not aware of it, yet he grows in grace and goes on inſenſibly from ſtrength to ſtrength. No oppoſition of infirmity or temptation ſhould make us deſiſt or be any juſt diſcouragement to us, becauſe the means of

of grace are put into a method as ſure and infallible as the courſe of nature, and all great productions in both of them ſpring from very minute originals; they take their firſt riſe from a point, and are carried on to their full proportion by a very gradual increaſe. SERM. XXI.

No force but that of cuſtom and habit can overcome nature; we every day ſee the power of it in the body by conſtant practice, even to that degree that it would exceed all belief but that we hear and ſee it. Juſt thus are the weakneſſes of nature healed, and the habits of virtue to be obtained by unwearied application; by having a ſharp and watchful eye upon all our vitious inclinations and appetites; by continual croſſing and thwarting them, interrupting all their acts and leſſening them perpetually; and by taking every little opportunity of putting virtue in practice: For every ſingle act of virtue gains a new acceſſion of additional ſtrength; and the frequent repetition of them is the ſame with this multiplication of powers in mechaniſm, which from the greateſt weakneſs is enlarged by a continued motion to an immenſe and irreſiſtible force.

Thus by conſtancy and perſeverance we ſhall arrive to a fulneſs of ſtature, to a confirmed and manly ſtate of holineſs; inſomuch that that grace or virtue, for which we had not the leaſt diſpoſition at firſt, ſhall grow up into our very conſtitution and temper, *creſcit occulto velut arbor ævo*, ſays Horace ſpeaking

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of the growing virtue and fame of young men; but David more fully ſpeaking of the man whoſe delight is in the law of the Lord, and who exerciſes himſelf in that law day and night, he likens him to *a tree planted by the water ſide, that will bring forth its fruit in due ſeaſon:* The ſimilitude is very expreſſive and full of ſignification, for the ſeeds of virtue are ſmall, and its increaſe is by imperceptible degrees; till at laſt it ſhoots up to a mighty height; it becomes conſpicuous, as a tree ſpreads its branches in the air, and is proof againſt all ſtorm and weather. It will ſurely come to this at laſt with us, if we never ceaſe endeavour but proceed in a conſtant ſteady courſe of improving every good and virtuous habit; but then on the contrary, every intermiſſion will carry us backward and renew the difficulty; and therefore we muſt ever have it in our minds that we ſtrive againſt nature, and are rowing up the ſtream; and while we continue to do ſo, our progreſs though but ſlow, yet it is ſure; but every time we ſlacken we are carried down the torrent, and by frequent neglects and intermiſſions we occaſion a perpetual round of the ſame trouble and difficulties over again.

The moſt reſty and ſtubborn nature will be tamed at laſt; and though it may indeed give us work enough to manage, and create us much pain, and diſturbance, and uneaſineſs, yet it can never run away with us till we have let go the reins.

2. Another

2. Another means here propoſed for over- SERM. coming temptation is that of prayer, the ab- XXI. ſolute neceſſity of which ariſes from hence, that the weakneſs and infirmity of our nature is ſuch, that without God's ſpecial aſſiſtance all temptation will be too ſtrong for us; and therefore we are taught to pray daily that God *would not lead us into temptation.* The moſt pernicious effect, and the greateſt danger of all temptation is, that it takes away the very diſpoſition to pray; and when once it hath cut off the aſſiſtance of divine grace, then it is ſure to prevail upon us.

Let therefore no infirmity of ours, or ſtrength of temptation diſcourage us from praying, ſince this is the very reaſon why we ought to pray, becauſe we are weak and temptation ſtrong; and that God will ſurely give *his holy Spirit to them that aſk him.* No cuſtom whatever hath ſo direct a tendency to ſpiritualize the mind and diſengage it from the world and all fleſhly appetites; and every prayer we make is an act and exerciſe of that virtue or grace we pray for: Wherefore if temptation preſs hard upon you, be thou urgent in prayer, as it increaſes ſo repeat your importunities; if it continue pray again, and let every return of the temptation ſend you to God for help; if you take care to go on to do this inceſſantly, and *not to faint*, aſſure yourſelf God will never be tired with your prayers; ſo that the temptation muſt be the firſt thing that fails; though you find not as

yet

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yet the effect of your prayers, yet pray on, and this is faith. *All things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer believing, ye ſhall receive*, (i. e.) whatſoever is neceſſary for us. If we firmly depend on him for the doing it after his own manner, and in his own good time; ſo that we can never be diſappointed but by our own impatience, or diſtruſt and wearineſs.

When we have brought our minds to a diſpoſition to pray on all occaſions; to power out our ſouls to God; to lay our weakneſſes and infirmities before him; and to implore his aid in all difficulties and temptations, and perſiſt in doing this *in faith without wavering*: The Devil will then hardly know how to aſſault us; becauſe every temptation to a ſin, will ſerve only to encreaſe our devotion, and to mind us of putting in practice the contrary virtues.

This is an excellent frame and temper of mind. But then this ſpirit of devotion is not to be had, but by the ſame means that other virtues are obtained, by a long uſe and cuſtom of praying; it is a habit, and muſt be got by practice and frequent exerciſe; and as the Apoſtle ſpeaks *by watching thereunto with all perſeverance.*

Having thus ſpoke to thoſe things which are more expreſly contained in the text, I ſhall only make three inferences from what hath been ſaid, with reſpect to three ſorts of people who take in the whole body of chriſtians.

1. The

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1. The firſt is the fatal miſtake of thoſe who reſt in the deſires of goodneſs, and are eaſy in the midſt of known and wilfull ſins, only upon this preſumption, that the temptation is inſuperable; and make this very text an excuſe for their ſin, which will be an unanſwerable argument of their condemnation: Becauſe the fleſh is weak, and the ſpirit as yet only willing; therefore, they are to *watch and pray that they enter not into temptation*, (i. e.) that they are not overcome by it; and if they are overcome by it, it is an infallible ſign they did not watch and pray, to as good purpoſes as they might have done. The text was ſpoke to the Apoſtles before the holy Ghoſt came upon them, and though they fell at that time, yet they afterwards glorified God in their lives, and by their deaths; and no temptation was too ſtrong for them. This text, together with all others in the new teſtament of the like nature, is applicable only to the firſt beginnings, and infant ſtate of a chriſtian, when he firſt ſets upon the work of religion, full of good deſires and ſincere reſolutions of virtue and holineſs; and nothing can be more abſurd than to imagine that it muſt be always thus with them: And to conclude, that the great and glorious work of religion is done, when they have only a willing mind to it; the fleſh indeed is weak, but this weakneſs muſt be healed or we are undone for ever.

A ſad condition of the ſoul this, when people have no other hope of ſalvation left them, but that

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that their duty is impracticable. They are indeed in a ſtate of infirmity, as they ſay of themſelves, and therefore they ſhould ſpend their whole lives in its cure. But this is ſo groſs and palpable a deluſion that nothing can move admiration more, than that ſuch numbers of people ſhould be gulled and cheated with it: But I am perſwaded that notwithſtanding all their ſhew of ſanctity, there is no one who allows himſelf in ſin upon colour of this principle, who would not have been as wicked without it; it is only their way of ſtifling conſcience for the preſent, and if they had not this, they would have found ſome other way of doing it as effectually, or continue in ſin againſt the full and clear conviction of their conſciences.

2. Another thing I ſhall obſerve from hence is, the deplorable condition of thoſe perſons in whom all inclination of the mind to virtue and holineſs is ceaſed; who have worn out all deſigns and purpoſes of religion and piety, and have ſo increaſed this natural weakneſs of the fleſh by vitious habits, that they *are paſt feeling*, and quite *alienated from the life of God:* Who have *given themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs:* And then every ſerious thought of God is a check upon their minds, and carries terror in it, and the very mention of virtue and holineſs makes them uneaſy.

The deſire of goodneſs is the laſt thing that leaves a man, it is the *ultimum moriens* in a chriſtian

chriſtian ſenſe; ſomething of it remains while there is any vital heat or ſpirits left, and is hardly quite extinguiſhed till the man is ſpiritually dead: And then if a ſtate of virtue and holineſs were to be had for a wiſh, he can hardly frame his mind to it; for the *very mind and conſcience is defiled.* His ſoul is ſo polluted in every faculty, and the moſt ſecret receſſes of it ſo impregnated with the guſt and reliſh of ſin, that he can have no more deſire of being good than a man in the height of drunkenneſs, of being ſober, the cauſe and the effect is the ſame in nature; he hath ſinned away his reaſon, his head ſwims, and for the remainder of his life he talks and thinks from a diſordered imagination: Then at laſt tumbles into the grave, where having ſlept out his debauch, reaſon then takes it's place again, it recoils terribly upon him, and fills him with endleſs and unſpeakable remorſe. SERM. XXI.

Now though we cannot ſay that ſuch men have ſinned out their day of grace, ſo as to be ſealed up to damnation by any poſitive act of God's; yet we know that the ſpirit of God may be ſo far grieved as to leave off ſtriving, and when that hath left a man he is carried to all ſin as neceſſarily as a body moves downwards: So that though we cannot ſay his damnation is abſolutely certain, yet it is highly probable; becauſe there is no ground of hope left either in nature or grace: And therefore all who have any ſuſpicions of their bordering upon this condition, would do well to look before them,

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and ſee how near they are to the very brink of this precipice; and for ought they know, one ſtep farther may plunge them into the bottomleſs pit. The leſs inclination they have to God and goodneſs, let them ſuſpect their condition the more; and if they find in themſelves any remains of this ſpiritual principle, any ſparks of theſe holy deſires, let them improve them without delay; let them call up all the powers of their mind, and ſhew what is the mighty force of an obſtinate reſolution, and a perſevering prayer.

3. The laſt thing I ſhall infer is the encouragement that may be drawn from hence, to all who are ſincere and hearty in the work of religion, and do in earneſt ſet about the conqueſt of all their luſts, and healing all the vitious tendencies of nature; but are apt to be diſcouraged at the prevalence and conſtancy of temptation. *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* And therefore if ye do uſe theſe means ye will not enter into it, (i. e.) ſo as to be overcome by it; for God *will never ſuffer you to be tempted above what you are able*, (i. e.) above the power of thoſe means that he hath appointed for that purpoſe.

Wherefore, if God hath given us a willing ſpirit and put in our mind good deſires, our buſineſs is to cheriſh and improve them into a *hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs*. Till theſe inclinations have taken full poſſeſſion of our ſouls, and got the aſcendency over all the affections and appetites of nature; inſomuch that

that the main current of our thoughts runs all that way; ſo as to put in practice all the means of grace, with the ſame vigour and application and eagerneſs, that we would endeavour to get meat and drink when we are thirſty and ſtarving: And to uſe as much temperance and reſtraint and management in healing this weakneſs of the fleſh, as we would do to ſave our lives in a dangerous languiſhing diſtemper. SERM. XXI.

If we thus preſs on forward, and not ſuffer ourſelves to be beaten off from our hearty endeavours by any difficulties we meet with; a ſure and certain victory attends us: For *through God that ſtrengthens us we ſhall be able to do all things*: We ſhall gain inſenſibly every day, till at laſt *our ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs*, (i. e.) till temptation itſelf ſhall ſerve only to renew our reſolutions and increaſe the vigour of our minds, till it ſhall be only the exerciſe of our virtue, and not the occaſion of ſin to us; and then it is that we may *count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations.*

O! it is a glorious conqueſt this, when temptations become only an occaſion of our virtue, and that the Devil himſelf withdraws them out of malice to us, leſt they ſhould be inſtruments of our virtue here, and of greater degrees of glory to us hereafter. When light and wanton objects only raiſe our indignation, and the moſt exquiſite meats and drinks become opportunities of ſelfdenial. When the higheſt ſtation doth not raiſe our minds above the level of the meaneſt ſincere chriſtian, and that the hardeſt

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eſt preſſure of affliction exalts our ſouls above the world; inſomuch that the greateſt extremities make us take faſter hold on the promiſes of God. When our very religion and piety cauſe in us a jealouſy of ourſelves, ſo that ſpiritual pride, the laſt and moſt ſubtile temptation of the Devil, is fully diſcovered, and itſelf become a prevailing motive of humility in us. When temptations beat upon us as the waves upon a rock not only to recoil again, but to waſh off all the dirt, and leave our virtue brighter and more conſpicuous.

Then is the man all tranquillity and innocence within, though there is nothing but ſtorm and tumult about him; and like Lot in the midſt of the ſodomites keeps his reſerve till he leaves the world to be conſumed with all it's luſts and vanities. In ſhort, he hath then gained a good reſemblance of the Holy Jeſus, on whom the greateſt temptations could not make the leaſt impreſſion. Then the ſoul is fit for that place where there is no temptation; it is already upon the wing for Heaven, and waits with impatience till this clog of fleſh and blood is ſtruck off. Bleſſed God what a ſemblance of Heaven is there in the breaſt of that man, in whom all the pleaſures of the world have loſt their charms, and that we have a quick guſt and reliſh of virtue and goodneſs; ſo that all our longings are that way, even to pant after them when we find a ſecret delight in the practice of virtue and holineſs, and are then only filled

and

and pleaſed and *ſatisfied as it were with marrow and fatneſs when* we obtain it; then we have laid a foundation for peace; for that *peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding*, and therefore cannot be underſtood till it is felt. SERM. XXI.

Having therefore this encouragement (*dearly beloved*), *let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit: Perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.*

SERMON XXII.

The war of the flesh and the spirit.

GALAT. v. 17.

For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other: So that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

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THIS distinction of flesh and spirit, and the great opposition between them, is intirely new under the Gospel, wherein it is made so much use of that it runs through the whole style of the new Testament. The heathen Philosophers did indeed distinguish nicely, between the sensitive appetite which is common to us with brutes, and that rational faculty which they found in themselves, (i. e.) between sense and reason; and this was so obvious they could not miss it. They saw a mighty difference between these two, that they often clashed and disagreed; they found themselves drawn two different ways at once by an oppoſite

opposite force, and that the violence of their sensual appetites hurried them on to the doing of things contrary to the dictates of their reason, and the full conviction of their minds; this they felt and complained of; but they little imagined what was the first spring and true cause of all this contradiction within us; namely, that there are two distinct parts of our frame of a very different nature, endued with contrary qualities, and opposite in all their inclinations and tendencies. This is peculiar to the Gospel, and such a key of knowledge, as opens to us those difficulties both of nature and grace, which were lockt up from the whole race of mankind before: and no man is aware at first reading how far this one text leads us into the knowledge both of ourselves, and of religion in general. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Insomuch that I would put this one saying of St. Paul's in the ballance with the united moral wisdom of the heathen world. SERM. XXII.

For as it supposes the original of our corruption by the fall, which they knew nothing of, so likewise it intimates to us that there are two very distinct parts of our make, and contrary in their whole nature. The true seat of this great corruption of humanity, with the exact manner and cause of it, namely the contradiction of that fleshly part to the genuine dictates of the spirit, which then becomes par-

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taker of its corruption, when it yields and is captivated by it; that the reason of our yielding to sin is because of that impetuousness and violence of our fleshly inclinations, which like a mighty stream bear down all the resistance of that spiritual part of us, so that this makes men act against the clear light of reason and full perswasion of their minds; that this contradiction of the upper part to the motions of the lower, is a sufficient demonstration of the essential goodness of the laws of God, (which is the use he makes of it, in the vii. of Romans,) and consequently that the true perfection of human nature consists, in bringing the fleshly part in subjection to the spiritual, this is the true παλιγγενεσία, or renovation of our natures; and lastly that the only effectual means of doing this, is by constant habitual opposition to the inclinations of the flesh, and thwarting and crossing all it's appetites till it is brought to be tame, and yielding, and ready to comply with the genuine sentiments of the pure mind.

This is the philosophy of the text, this is philosophy for all the world, they are things of the last consequence to mankind; and therefore the contemplation of them must be profitable and delightful. But because I am not now to write a tract, but make a discourse, I shall put what I have to speak to these into this method.

1st. I shall consider a little more particularly, what is here meant by flesh and spirit.

2dly,

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2dly, I shall consider in what instances they are contrary to one another, and the nature of their opposition.

3dly, I shall speak something as briefly as I can, to those several things which are either expressly contained in this text, or directly deducible from it.

I. As to the first then. By the *flesh* is here meant not only those bodily appetites which are common to us with brutes, but likewise those irregular passions and affections of the soul, which are proper only to rational creatures. By the *spirit* is signified, that most refined and excellent part of us, by which we are more immediately formed after the image of God: That which the Hebrews expressed by the word *Ruah*, that immaterial immortal part of us, which is the seat of the pure understanding and will; in opposition to *Nafash*, the seat of all carnal desires and affections; (i. e.) the sensitive soul as it includes all those evil inclinations of the mind, which proceed from any compliance with sensual appetites, and as far as it is tainted by any intercourse, or commerce with them.

But because it is a distinction of no small use, both in the theory and practice of religion, that we may apprehend the difference more exactly, we must consider that it is an opinion founded on very good reason, that our frame is composed of three distinct parts, each of them severally expressed by St. Paul, in 1 *Thess.* v. 23. *And I pray God your whole*

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spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word is plainer to this purpose, it calls these three parts ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν the whole of you. It is not likely that St. Paul here would have made use of a frivolous and groundless distinction with so much solemnity: And a learned man in his comment upon the text, remarks, that the same difference might be observed from the words of the creation of man, where there is mention made distinctly of the *dust of the earth*, the *living soul*, and *the breath of life*; and shews withal, how this text of St. Paul's was so taken by the learnedest fathers of the Church; which is not at all to be wondered at, since I cannot see how it can be understood any otherwise, without a needless tautology.

Now by the body we are to understand this bulky weight of flesh and blood, this unweildy grosser part of us which we see and feel as we do any other body, and lies as plain and obvious to our senses as any other mass, a stock or a stone.

By the spirit is signified that sprightly immaterial part of us without bulk or quantity, not confined even to motion; which comes immediately out of the hands of God like himself a pure uncompounded being, the only seat of our understanding and reason, which the Greeks expreſt, by the τὸ ἡγημονικὸν, the commanding principle part, τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν θεὸς, the God in us; and the Latins by *particulam auræ divinæ*, a particle of the divinity, or communication

communication of the divine nature; and which Lucretius meant by his fourth ingredient of the soul, his something, he knew not what, which he called the *animam ipsius animæ*: And in the language of the New Testament, it is usually expreſt by the word πνεῦμα or spirit, as particularly in the 1 *Cor.* ii. 11. *What man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him:* And it is the more remarkable, because here there is a comparison made between ours and the spirit of God, in the former verse. SERM. XXI.

Lastly, by the soul in that text of St. Paul's is meant that middle part of us, which includes our imagination, and is the seat of all our passions and affections; which is expreſt here by ψυχὴ the Soul: And for this the Greeks had many names of contempt, they called it ἀλογία unreasonableness; ἐπιθυμία concupiscence; ἵππος the horse; τὸ θηρίον the wild beast and brutal part of the man.

So that now we may see very distinctly what is meant by the flesh in my text, (i. e.) the body with all it's natural appetites; and the lower soul with all it's variety of passions and affections; and by the spirit, that immortal immaterial part of us, which is the immediate seat of our understanding.

It will be only necessary to remark farther here, that though the spirit of man is more immediately intended in this text; yet we may likewise understand the spirit of God as

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far as it works in concurrence with our spirit, and assists it against the opposition given it by the lower and corrupted part of the man.

II. To consider in what instances they are contrary one to another, and the nature of their opposition. And first, in general they are contrary in this; that the spirit is in it self pure and undefiled in it's own nature, as little liable to moral as natural corruption; and can be no otherwise polluted, than by those stains which are derived upon it by its union, and close conjunction with the lower soul and body: It may be so overcome by the force of bodily appetites, and borne down by the violence of our sinful passions and affections by giving way to them, that it can no way exert it self: So that there shall not be one virtuous inclination left in the whole man: And then he may properly be said to be *corrupted in his very mind and conscience.* And again, when by any secret impulse of the spirit of God the mind is rouzed, recovers it self again, so as to bear down all the vitious inclinations of the inferior man, that they become obedient to its motions; that it can sway them which way it will; then he is said to be *renewed in the spirit of his mind:* So that my meaning is, that there is a spiritual principle within us, that must, and will ever acknowledge virtue and goodness, and will it too; insomuch that the wickedest man living would be good and virtuous, if it might be had for a wish:

Nay,

Nay, even the Devil himself would be an Angel of light again. SERM. XXII.

Now that there is such an indelible character of goodness, and innate tendency towards it, imprinted upon the spirit of man; which though it may be defaced and obscured, yet can never be totally obliterated; such a portion of heavenly fire, which though it may be buried under a mighty heap of ashes, yet can never be wholly extinguished. This I say seems to be the sense of most of those divine epithets, given to the superior part of man by the Philosophers; though they took it only for a distinct quality. Among others they gave to the rational soul one was, that it was ἀπαθὴς without passion, and therefore not subject to transgress; which in all likelihood gave occasion to that mistake of the Stoicks apathy, which opinion was true, if applyed only to the purely spiritual part. And Plato says, this rational part of us, *like the top of* Olympus, *enjoys a perpetual serenity*; *and looks down upon the irrational part, beholding all the storms of it's passions and affections, like clouds, and winds, and thunder in the lower region.* And the learned Dr. Willis, in that excellent chapter, where he compares the soul of man with that of brutes, speaking to this very purpose hath these words; *non ita tamen accipi debet, quasi anima rationalis utpote immaterialis; proindèque, ἀπαθὴς habita a quolibet appulsu boni vel mali, succussa turbulentis cupiditatibus, aut aversationum affectibus obnoxia fuerit; hoc enim naturæ*

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turæ ejus incorporeæ, quin & dignitati, superque aliis potentiis prærogativæ repugnat.

Besides, the scripture seems to be very expres's in this; our Saviour says, *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.* And this notion runs through the whole 7th of the Romans, where the *law of the mind* is supposed to be very good, even in those corrupt and unregenerate persons he is there describing; and opposes it to the *law of sin in their members.* And at the 16th verse, he supposes a man may do that that he would not, (i. e.) that in the committing of sin, the inferior man acts in plain contradiction to the purely spiritual part of him; and therefore it follows, *it is no more I that do it*, (i. e.) the purely spiritual part,) *but sin that dwells in me*, (i. e.) the vitious inclinations of the lower man. For *I know that in me dwelleth no good thing:* And he explains himself, (i. e.) *in my flesh.* So that he all along supposes a spiritual principle within us, pure in its sentiments, in the midst of all bodily pollutions; the mistaking of which, and imagining that St. Paul meant that of the whole man, which he applies only to one part of him, gave occasion to that damnable heresie of the Gnosticks, who fancied that a spiritual person was no more polluted by his sins, than gold is by being rolled in the dirt: And likewise to that fatal error so near of kin to it, of our dissenting brethren; who imagine St. Paul speaks here in the person of a regenerate man; which

which I shall have occasion to speak of before I have done with this subject. SERM. XXII.

II. But 2dly, as this is in itself pure, so the lower man composed of the body and sensitive soul, is the immediate seat of all our corruption, and is totally polluted and defiled in all its faculties; there is not by nature one regular motion in our whole frame; and all the inclinations and tendencies of it are so stubborn and inflexible to good, and under so little command, that without the motions and concurrence of God's preventing grace, we are not able so much as to think one good thought; much less to put any good purpose in execution: And now, because the nature of the pure mind is such, that it can never be brought to approve those corrupt and wicked appetites and inclinations; therefore, there is perpetual war and eternal contradiction between them. There can never be any league or truce, they are implacable enemies; and there is such innate inveteracy between them, that they can never come to any terms of composition; and nothing can put an end to the strife, but the absolute intire conquest of one or the other.

Here is the true cause and ground of that civil war within us; this spark of divinity which lay buried under the ruins of the fall, is first blown up by the same spirit that breathed into us the breath of life; then are all endeavours used to stifle and suppress, and if it were possible, utterly to extinguish it. As the spirit prevails,

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prevails, so for a while, the resistance of the inferior man is stronger; its appetites and passions oppose it with their utmost violence; and when they begin to fail and give ground, then the powers of hell are alarmed, and the wiles of the Devil are lent for succours; and then the mind doth not wrestle only *against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and against the rulers of darkness:* However, if it do persist, the grace of God is sufficient for it, and a sure and certain victory attends it in the end.

However, such is the corruption of the lower man, that it makes a strong resistance, and loses it's ground but by inches; sometimes it gains upon the mind, and then is beaten back again; but never ceases to oppose and contradict all its sentiments and resolutions: And these two contradictory principles within us was what the Heathens were very sensible of, and bewailed even in the most obdurate state of impiety; and when they were about the greatest villanies, they had a sense of the guilt, and found something within which diswaded them from it, but was always overpowered. Medea, in the tragedy, ready to murder her young brother, and cut him into shreds says, I am sensible of the villany I am about to commit, θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, but my passion overcomes my will. And Laius being diswaded from his cruel purpose of making away his son, answers, I am already sensible of all

all you say, it is all right, γνώμην δ' ἔχοντα μ'ὴ φύ- SERM.
σις ἐιάξηται, yet nature hurries me on contrary XXII.
to the sense of my own mind: And Ovid gives a short description of this in that well known saying of his, *video meliora probique deteriora sequor*. And says Seneca, complaining of this contradiction within him, *quid est quod nos aliò tendentes, aliò trahit? Quid colluctatur cum animo nostro? Fluctuamus inter varia consilia:* And therefore well might another say with indignation, *odi artus, fragilemque hunc corporis usum, desertorem animi.* I loath these members, this feeble body of mine runegado from the soul.

But St. Paul gives a much more lively description of this opposition, and wherein the corruption of our nature consists; for speaking of a person yet in his sins, *I delight*, says he, *in the law of God after the inward man; but there is another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members:* And again, *He finds a law, that when he would do good evil is present with him:* And again, *I know that in me*, (i. e.) *in my flesh dwelleth no good thing*, (i. e.) in the lower man, as it is opposed to the purely spiritual part of us; which till it is stifled, and utterly put to silence, never fails to contradict all the motions of concupiscence in the body and sensitive soul; and to dissuade us from giving way to all their sinful desires and affections.

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The experience of every man's own conscience, who looks into himself, will give him a lively notion of this warfare; he finds two contradictory principles within him, drawing him two different ways at the same time; he finds himself often distracted with contrary resolutions; he feels warm disputes within him, arguments offered on both sides, and urged on both sides, with potent and prevailing motives; this minute he is bold, and fixt, and determined to take the council of the spirit; the next perhaps he is shaken, and staggered, and bends quite another way. And while we are deliberating we are carried down the stream of our fleshly desires, at the same time that we are listening to the dictates of the mind; and plunged into sin with the applauses of them in our mouth: So that the lower man often drags the spirit with it, to wallow in the mire of those sins, which it can never justify or approve. When the relish of the sin is over, then the spirit chides, and upbraids it with the guilt and the folly of the sin; this is remorse. Then the mind prevails to put the whole man again into a posture of defence, and he is prepared for another tryal; and this is repeated, till by frequent relapses, the power and influence of the mind, over the inferior faculties, is much impaired. At last they grow rampant and ungovernable; they run into open rebellion; cast off its yoke; disown its power; bind it hand and foot in chains, till, as the scripture expresses it, *it is captivated to the law of*

of sin: Then they take their swing without controul; and then the man is spiritually dead; because the condition of the mind is then so weak and feeble, that nothing less than a miraculous degree of grace can restore it to a mastery and dominion over the lower man. SERM. XXII.

But on the contrary, if at any time during this engagement, (though it be when the mind is near dethroned) being rouzed by any potent motive, or quickened and encouraged by the secret operation of the spirit of God working with our spirit, it lays in its claim; asserts it's right of dominion; then it brings over first the weaker party; by degrees it gains strength enough to grapple with the strongest appetites; it recovers its birth-right, sits in the throne and governs the rebellious passions with a rod of iron; revenging itself upon them with mortifications and self-denials; and upon all occasions punishing them with severities according to their deserts; and then the man is in a happy and regenerate state.

Herein therefore, lies our disease and our misery, that the desires and inclinations of the lower soul and body are, by nature, so much stronger than the purely spiritual part of us: But the grace of God helps this infirmity of ours, and conveys secret assistance to the mind, in proportion to the degrees and violence of our corruption; which if it makes use of, it will gather strength every day; but if it fails to exert itself according to that power that is afforded, it will lose ground continually; the

grace

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grace of God will be withdrawn from it by degrees; till it is left at last in a pure state of nature, unable to overpower the least tendency in us to sin.

III. I shall not here stay to shew how this oppofition of two contrary principles within us, is a plain and evident proof of the immateriality of the soul; nor how far this notion may be improved, to give a clear solution of most of those difficulties, both in the theory and practice of religion, which have run men into so many perplexities; which have been canvassed with so much heat and uncharitableness on all sides; and have been the grounds of many objections made against the christian religion, by men who are glad of any pretence to be debauched; and since they are resolved to be so, do catch at any thing that makes for the present ease and quiet of their consciences; such as the necessity of a supernatural assistance; the justice of eternal torments; the nature and propagation of original sin; the essential difference between moral good, and evil; together with the natural necessity of misery to the wicked in another world: Which are plain consequences from this text; but I leave these things for another place, and shall now only mention two of the most practical inferences from this text. And accordingly,

1st. We may, from what hath been said, observe what a fatal error those people live in, who mistake this meer state of nature for a state of grace; and make use of this very text

to

to support the vilest and most dangerous sort of hypocrisy. It is said plainly, say they, *that we cannot do the things that we would:* But the words in the original are ἵνα μὴ ἃ ἂν θέλητε, ταῦτα ποιῆτε, So that ye do not the things that ye would. So that the plain sense of the text is this; the purely spiritual part of us, stirred up by the grace of God, disapproves and opposes the committal of sin; but the appetites of the body, and evil inclinations of the sensitive soul, make a strong opposition; and this is the reason why so many persons act clear contrary to the judgment of their minds, and the suggestions of the holy spirit of God, (i. e.) in short the reason why so many sins are committed, though they know better, and have an inclination to virtue, is, because that in opposition to the mind, they suffer themselves to be carried away with the violent inclinations of the lower man: this is the literal sense of the text. And now therefore, what will become of all those who have comforted themselves with this notion amidst their habitual wilful sins, and built all their hopes of mercy upon this airy foundation; nothing but a meer mistake in the translation? O but say they, though this saying of St. Paul will not bear that meaning, yet he speaks it plainly in another place, in the 7th of the Romans, *The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that do I.* But they should consider that these two are parallel places, and therefore must have the same meaning; espe-

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cially being spoke by the same person. If he hath no such meaning here, that a regenerate person may be guilty of wilful sins, they may well presume that he can have no such meaning in the other.

And indeed this text naturally leads us into the true meaning of that whole chapter. The whole substance of his argument in that chapter is built upon what he says exdressly here; that there are two very different parts of our make, the pure mind, and the fleshly part of us, which includes all the appetites of the body, and sinful passions of the inferior soul. This spirit of ours, by the motions of God's grace, approves what is good, and hath a will to it; but the less noble part of us is polluted in all its faculties, and inclines quite the contrary way; and from hence he infers his conclusion undeniably, since I or any man else that commits a sin, hath something within him that at the same time disapproves it, and tries to dissuade him from it; this is a fair proof that the laws of God are holy, and just, and true.

So that we see these are some of those places in St. Paul's epistles, which St. Peter observes, *some that were unlearned and unstable should rest to their own destruction*; which is so remarkable of our age, that vast numbers of christians, whole societies, and professions of them are zealous asserters of this false and groundless interpretation; though as a learned

made

man observes in his comment, these texts were understood in the right sense, by all the orthodox party, for the first three hundred years of christianity. SERM. XXII.

We are so sensible of our own frailty, that God knows how little reason we have to make the conditions of salvation harder than they really are; and did we not see plainly that this is a broken reed, we should be as ready to catch at it as they: But we see plainly how it is contrary, not only to St. Paul's design in these places, but against common sense and reason, to think that the abhorrence of a sin, and reluctance of the mind, which is the great aggravation of sin, should be the excuse for it; it is this very thing that makes it a sin; and this present sense of the mind, and judgment of their consciences, will one day render them liable to the judgment of God and eternal damnation.

A strange reason this for people to give, why they may live in any sin, because they have a temptation to it; if there were no temptation to sins of lust and covetousness; of intemperance, of cheating, and dishonesty, and spiritual pride; they would be very chaste, and liberal, and temperate, and just, and humble. But it is a dangerous state of soul when people are holy without being virtuous: For sure I am, our christianity requires them both; and it is then people become truly sanctified and regenerate, when they are able to abstain from the evil they would not, and have it in their

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power to do the good that they would; when they have brought the flesh so much in subjection to the mind, that they can glorify God in their body, as well as in their spirit.

This reluctance of the mind, as you have already seen, is no more than what the Heathens found in themselves at the committal of the greatest and most unnatural villanies; it was no excuse for them, and shall it be an excuse for christians, who have greater assistance of grace?

They must own at best, these texts are not very clear for them; but I will give them plain texts against them, Rom. viii. 13. *If ye live after the flesh ye shall dye; but if through the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live:* And that they may have no opinion at all left of the goodness of their state, from that mighty abhorrence they find in themselves of those sins they are guilty of, let them consider that St. Paul says, *that though they may be delighted with the law of God in the inner man*; at the very same time, *the motions of sins may work in their members, to bring forth fruit unto death.*

2. Another thing we may observe from these words is, the true worth and value of mortifications, and the absolute necessity of habitual self-denials: We have seen how the case is with us, the parts of our frame are become a contradiction to one another; and our misery is, that the inclinations and appetites of

of the lower man have now the upper hand; *the flesh lusteth against the spirit*, and oppose all it's motions with such force and violence, that it bears down before it all the suggestions of the spirit; which makes so weak and feeble a resistance, that we rarely do the good things that we would; we are hurried into sin with impetuous violence, contrary to the sense of our minds, and the judgment of our consciences; which condition of infirmity is very well expressed by that similitude of Socrates, who calls the purely rational part of us the *rider*; and the lower part of us, containing our passions and appetites, *the Horse*; which being resty, and wild, and unmanaged; frets, and foams, and plunges, and runs away with it's rider into bogs and precipices. SERM. XXII.

Now there is no way of taming this beastly part of us, and bringing it to some temper and obedience to the mind, but by crossing and contradicting all it's motions; abating the fury of it's passions and appetites, by denying it those objects that gratify and nourish them; if we continue to do this, this horse of ours will become tame and gentle; it will keep the road, and carry us on our journey to heaven with courage.

This is the proper business of our lives, to break the force and violence of these irregular inclinations, by self denials, and mortifications, and severities; these are the sure and effectual means of virtue and holiness, and no good degree of these is to be obtained without

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them. And this is the reason why the stile of the new testament is so full of expressions to this purpose; and that such an air of sadness and melancholy runs through the whole tenor of the Gospel; because crosses, and pain, and trouble, do all of them break and suppress the vitious inclinations of the lower man; they quicken the mind, and make it exert all it's strength and force: Whereas riches, and plenty, and quiet, *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil all the lusts thereof.* And this is the reason why our Saviour says, it is so *hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*; because there are constant supplies of all objects, which gratify their fleshly desires; insomuch that it is next to a natural impossibility for those who live in softness, and ease, and pleasure, ever to gain an entire conquest over the lower man.

And therefore, all those who live in plenty and ease would do well to consider, that since the providence of God hath exempted them from necessary want, and crosses, and afflictions; how necessary it is for them to supply the absence of them with voluntary self denials and severities upon themselves, one way or other; for it is most true that, *through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

How much self-denials and mortifications are out of request, and undervalued by those very persons, who fancy the grace of the Gospel will dispense with the sins they commit with

with great reluctance, I need not mention; SERM. because though they are always uneasy at XXII. hearing the truth, yet they are never convinced. Fasting from sin, say they, is the true fast; and denying our lusts, the best self-denial: Yes, if they could be sure of denying their sin, without ever denying themselves that which is no sin. But of all people living shall they have this in their mouths, who yield to their lusts in hopes of mercy, because they are too violent to be overcome; and at the same time despise this only effectual means of conquering them. Catch them in such a contradiction as this is, in buying and selling if you can.

But I am more concerned to take notice of the great neglect of these things, among those of our own communion. It is hard to tax the lightness of the age, after any manner, without the imputation of ill nature and sourness. But if we must not upbraid people with their vices, yet I hope we may bewail the danger of their condition; since it is almost impossible to reconcile all the modes of vanity, and usual gaiety of the world to christianity. That vain, and costly, and affected variety of dress, shews plainly that the mind is sunk in flesh; and that notwithstanding some little appearance of a fashionable piety, yet, there is a manifest want of the very life and substance of religion. *They that are after the flesh*, says St. Paul, *do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit:* Which

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of these two is their case, they must be blind that cannot see; it is a sure way of judging whether or no they *give way to those fleshly lusts that war against the soul:* And therefore, since they thus sow to the flesh, they must expect of the flesh to reap corruption.

Our Saviour says, *if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* Let him not wait for afflictions, and troubles, and crosses; but take it up of his own accord, by many instances of self-denial, and the frequent exercises of severities upon himself. And St. Paul tells us, he *fought not as one that beat the air*; because *he kept his body under and brought it into subjection*; and indeed all religion is but hypocrisy without it. So that we see what is generally mistaken for a degree of perfection in religion, is for the most part a thing of indispensible obligation. And from hence we may see the true value even of the greatest voluntary severities, and retirements, and abnegations of the world; because they effect the mastery of themselves in a little time, and as it were all at once; which perhaps would not otherwise be compassed in the course of many years: Though it must be confessed, they commonly have this ill effect, that they puff men up with an opinion of themselves; so that they become haughty, and troublesome, and arrogant. I do not say that these extraordinary degrees are matter of duty; but as much of them is necessary as is required to vanquish these bodies of ours,

ours, and bring them into absolute subjection: And still the more we are mortified to ourselves and the world, the clearer and more affecting sense we shall have of virtue and holiness; and the greater advances we shall make towards heaven and happiness. SERM. XXII.

Let us therefore set ourselves to the work of renewing our nature, and purging it from all this dross and corruption; let us offer up our prayers to almighty God for daily supplies of grace, that *the spirit of God may work together with our spirit*, that it may obtain an intire victory over the lower man; and let us omit no means of doing this; let us in this contest give the mind fair play; let us hearken to its dictates, and cherish all its motions; let us give it all the helps we can; assist and encourage it, by cutting off all supplies of the lower man; and let us maintain the ground it gets by constant perseverance, till by degrees our bodies become a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.

I must confess there is a great deal of trouble and uneasiness in the work; and it will cost many a sore conflict before it comes to this; and little do those people know, who never tryed heartily, what a difficult thing it is to be intirely and sincerely good; all the means we can use is little enough. Let us therefore be content to be restless and uneasy for a while; and then rest, eternal rest, will follow. This little pain will be our security from eternal torments,

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ments, and will purchase for us an exceeding weight of glory.

O! it will be a most glorious change, even in this life, when all the appetites and passions of the lower man, by a holy violence and course of rigorous and voluntary severities, are so tamed and intirely subdued that they shall wait the motions of the mind; when it governs them with absolute power, says to one go, and it goes; to another come, and it comes; and can say to the proudest passion, *hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.*

Then shall be effected the most wonderfull change in nature; these two combatants shall lay down their animosities, and kiss and embrace each other; these enemies, from the most inveterate enmity, and implacable malice, shall become the most intimate, deareſt friends; they will live together here in a more than conjugal affection; till they depart hence in peace, and their next joyful meeting shall be at the resurrection of the just; never to part again, and yet never to be weary of one another; never to fall out or disagree: There will not be the least jarr nor suspicion of one another left; but they shall live in everlasting joy, and peace, and love.

This flesh, *in which now there dwelleth no good thing*, shall then have nothing in it that is bad; that which is now so full of stubbornness and contradiction, shall then close with the pure mind in all it's motions; and what is now its load, and its prison, shall then be its ornament,

ment, and it shall delight in the union; for there shall be no perfection in the soul but shall have a correspondent beauty in the body; and it shall be more perfect and glorious than when it first came out of the hands of God. SERM. XXII.

Call up therefore all the powers of your minds, and set to the work. The weakest person that hears me hath this image of God, this spark of heaven within him; and it is not worldly wisdom, but the divine grace that must be your assistance: Make it therefore your business to trim this lamp, and supply it with oil, that it may burn clear at the appearing of the lamb. And I pray God *your body, and soul, and spirit may be preserved unblameable, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:* To whom with the Father and the holy Ghost, the holy ever blessed and glorious Trinity, be all honour, and glory, and praise, and thanksgiving, adoration and worship, now and to all eternity. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXIII.

The duty of plucking out the eye explained.

MARK ix. 47, 48.

And if thine eye offend thee pluck it out: It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be caſt into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.

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THESE words of our Saviour are recited, as ſpoke upon two occaſions: In the 5th of St. Matthew they are an application to what he ſpeaks concerning the purity and chaſtity of the mind, which is equally neceſſary with that of the body. Here, and elſewhere, they follow our Saviour's diſcourſe, concerning giving offence to weaker chriſtians, and diſcouraging any beginnings of chriſtianity in others, out of ſpiritual pride and fondneſs for our own opinions. In one place is ſignified, our

our being drawn into sin ourselves; in the other, the being the occasion of sin to others. SERM. XXIII.

Now whether the text is an answer to any objection expressly made, as some think; or whether they were spoke to obviate the thoughts of mens minds, upon hearing of precepts which had so much appearance of difficulty, is much the same thing; it is plain they suppose precepts he had been giving of the chastity of the very eye, and the sincerity and humility of the mind, by cherishing all degrees of religion and piety in others, in contradiction to their own opinions and worldly interests, might look like a heavy yoke, and were hard sayings, and degrees of virtue too refined for flesh and blood. If people must not transgress with a look themselves, nor be any way the occasion of sin to others, though by doing what is innocent and lawful in itself; who then can be saved?

But in the words of my text he lets them know, that these degrees of virtue are both necessary and possible; and therefore, that they are difficult is no objection; for what ought not men to do to gain heaven, and avoid the everlasting torments of Hell? If men will endeavour as much for the preservation of their souls, as they ordinarily do for the health of their bodies, they will surely gain their point, and overcome the strongest temptations: If thy hand or foot offend thee cut it off; and if thine eye offend thee pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God

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God maimed, or with one eye; than having two eyes to be caſt into hell fire.

The word to offend or ſcandalize is metaphorical, and taken from walking: So that it ſignifies any thing ſuch as a ſtone, or block in our way, which may make us trip or ſtumble; from thence it is uſed to expreſs any thing which may let or hinder us in our chriſtian courſe, and make us ſtumble or fall into ſin; and therefore if our eye offend us, or be any occaſion of ſin, if all other ways fail; we are bid to pluck it out.

As to that expreſſion of entering into the kingdom of God with one eye; the meaning is, that it is better for us to want one of our eyes while we are in this world, and go to heaven at laſt; than to keep both our eyes here, and by that means be caſt into hell hereafter. A form of ſpeaking very agreeable to what we find in other places; as where our Saviour ſays, that the publicans and Harlots enter into the kingdom of Heaven before them; (i. e.) thoſe who had been publicans and harlots.

Nothing is leſs intended here, than that people ſhould uſe any violence to their bodies, by wounding or maiming themſelves any way, and diſabling it for any the actions of life; this is contrary to the laws of God and nature; we are never to do any thing for religion and virtue that is unnatural or unreaſonable. But the whole is a figurative way of ſpeaking; by our eyes, is ſignified any thing that is near and dear

dear to us; and by plucking them out is meant, the removing them from us, and denying the gratification of any inclination of the body, or desire of the mind which betrays us into sin. The force of the argument is in this; it is highly prudent and advisable to quit some present pleasure or advantage, though with great uneasiness and reluctance, than lose a greater good hereafter, and undergo a greater evil; it is a piece of prudence that common sense suggests to every one; it is no other than what men practise every day in the concernments of life: And nothing is more usual than for people to have their flesh sear'd, and their limbs cut off to preserve the rest of their body; they undergo a present pain, though very acute and violent, for future health and ease. This is what he adviseth men to in religion; and though they feel much uneasiness and hardship, in denying their lusts and vitious inclinations; and find the attainment of virtue and holiness ever so difficult; yet, let them act by the same rules and principles of prudence in this, that they do in other things; and let the expectation of those advantages they shall procure by it hereafter, prevail on them to undergo chearfully the hardships and difficulties; and let the prospect of hell flames on the other hand, make them forego those sinful pleasures which will surely bring them to that miserable end.

So

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So that here we have in these words,

1st, The hardship and difficulties of virtue and holiness on one side, laid against the joys of heaven on the other. And,

2dly, The pleasures of sin in this life compared, with the torments of hell hereafter.

And therefore, to carry on this motive of our Saviour's, and render it of as great efficacy as we can; let us in each of these instances consider, the great disproportion between the loss there is on one hand, and the gain on the other.

I. As to the first then; the great disproportion between the difficulties of virtue and holiness, and the advantages obtained by them will appear, if we consider these three things.

I. That since it is even possible to secure our innocency and to be virtuous and holy; let the hardships and difficulties be what they will, yet they are nothing to what is gained by them. If it had been utterly impossible for us to attain that virtue and holiness, which is necessary to qualifie us for heaven and happiness, then all our reasonable wishes had been that God would only put it in our power; nay, we had desired no more in order to obtain heaven; and what ever the difficulties were, we should appear willing to undergo them. What is it we should not be willing to do in such a case, in order to procure the everlasting joys of a future state? Now this very wish we have obtained; it is in our power; and by the unspeakable goodness of God we are left

left in the hand of our council; life and death is before us, we have a perfect freedom of choosing either one or the other; and the worst we can imagine is what our Saviour supposes here, that we voluntarily undergo some pain and uneasiness for the prevention of a Sin. SERM. XXIII.

And therefore, were we all literally to cut off our hands and feet, and that God required we should actually pluck out our eyes to preserve our innocence, yet this would be but a small and easy condition for obtaining those unspeakable joys of another life. Men will do all this for a little health, and suffer the torture of cutting off their limbs only to prolong their life, and support a sinking carcass a few years longer in this world: They will have one limb cut off after another, and dye by piecemeal rather than go off all at once. What is more usual than for people to undergo the severest methods of cure, and endure the searing, the cutting, and burning of their flesh, in order to their health and easy living a while longer here.

And if men will do all this for a little health, and to continue perhaps a crazy sickly carcass in life, only a few days longer; then how much rather should they undergo this, to preserve that health and innocence of soul, which places them in a condition of entering into the kingdom of God, where there is fullness of joy, and unconceivable pleasures for evermore; nay, if we were to cut off a limb (if it were possible) every day, and pluck out an

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eye; yet, this would bear no proportion to that weight of glory which shall be revealed in us.

Now though this be not required from us in any general precept, and that no one may exercise such unnatural violence upon himself; yet (as it is with the health of the body) men may fall into such circumstances, that there is no preserving their souls in virtue and innocence, without yielding their members to be cut off, and their very eyes to be pluckt out, if the enemies of religion and virtue should make use of these methods of cruelty. If we cannot keep them without a sin, without transgressing some of the commands of God, or denying the faith of Christ; we must yield them up to the tormentors: All natural affection must cease, even to the members of our own body; and we must cast them from us with indignation, for the effects of willful and deliberate guilt upon the soul are as real, and of as fatal a consequence, as that of a spreading gangrene in the body, and will as surely prove mortal in the end; and when once it comes to this fatal case, there is no other method of cure.

So that then the question is often literally, as our Saviour puts it; whether it be not better to cut off their hands and feet, and pluck out their eyes, or being maimed here, or suffering a painful and violent death to enter into the kingdom of God; than by preserving their life or limbs to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched?

ed? And accordingly we find many who have been actually reduced to this extremity whose lot, or rather whose great glory and happiness it was, to be thought worthy to suffer for the truth, have made the better choice; to whom this precept of our Saviour was practicable in it's strictest sense. Who having their eyes upon that recompence of reward, in the midst of racks and tortures, have rejoyced in hope of the glory of God. If it should come to this with us, yet it is no more than what hath been done before us, by those who were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, slain with the sword, were destitute, afflicted, tormented. The histories of the primitive Church, abound with examples of multitudes who underwent great variety of torments for the faith of Christ, and the preservation of a good conscience; and we need not look far back for large catalogues of martyrs who endured cutting, and racking, and burning, and all that the malice of their enemies could inflict upon them, or the body of man could suffer; and all upon this principle, that it is better to enter into life maimed, than by sparing their life and limbs to run the hazard of eternal death. SERM. XXIII.

II. The disproportion between the difficulty of virtue and holiness here, and the joys of heaven hereafter will appear, if we consider that the difficulty is not so great as we imagine; for the greatest difficulty in religion

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(excepting the caſe of perſecution only) is, the firſt curbing our vitious inclinations, and breaking the force of our evil habits: This indeed is difficult to fleſh and blood, for many of thoſe inclinations are now in one ſenſe natural to us; we are ſhapen in wickedneſs, and in ſin hath our mother conceived us. The evil tendencies of our nature, are part of ourſelves, which is the reaſon why they are here expreſt by cutting off a hand, or a foot, and plucking out an eye, and they are ſtill more rivetted and confirmed by cuſtom and habits, which are as a ſecond nature to us; and therefore it cannot but be a matter of great difficulty; nay, it is ſo great, that the ſcriptures expreſs it by that of a natural impoſſibility, as of the Æthiopian changing of his skin, and the Leopard his ſpots: And in truth it is ſo hard, that it is utterly impoſſible for us by meer natural ſtrength to get over the firſt difficulty, it is too ſtrong for all the power of human reſolution; and therefore it is, that the ſupernatural aſſiſtance of God's preventing grace is afforded us. And though we have this, yet our own experience may tell us, what a mighty conflict there is between the fleſh and the ſpirit, between the grace of God, and our own reaſon on the one hand, and the law of ſin in our members on the other; when we attempt to oppoſe and contradict the ſinful appetites of our body, or vitious inclination of our mind, we meet with mighty oppoſition and reluctances; the temptation draws

draws us one way, the prospect of our loss and danger another; the temptation whispers nothing but delight and pleasure in one ear, our consciences, the loss of heaven, and the vengeance of hell in the other; so that what between doubting and wavering, yielding and recoiling again, the mind is in perplexity and distraction, and can hardly come to a fixed purpose and resolution. SERM. XXIII.

We must confess this is hard; and so great a difficulty that few make their way through it. The curbing or stifling a natural inclination, or breaking off a sinful custom, either of injustice or envy, of intemperance or unchastity, of pride or luxury, is in truth a cutting off a limb, or plucking out an eye; it is like the tearing of our flesh and parting with a rotten member; but how hard so ever it may be, even upon this supposition, that it is the greatest difficulty in the world, since it is but difficult and not impossible, it is better to undergo it than never enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Consider what strange difficulties men will undergo in prosecution of any worldly ends; how much pains they will be at to get a sum of money, or preferment: They will deny themselves most of the diversions and satisfactions of this life, their meat and drink, and sleep; they will impair their health, break off with their dearest friends, they will venture their limbs and life and all, and actually go through fire and water to gain their

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point: How sedulous and careful they will be to mind an error in their carriage and deportment, and how restless and uneasy they make themselves to rectify a natural defect in the body, nay, almost to the quitting most of the enjoyments of this life; and it is with incredible trouble that some men attain to habits, either of body or mind, in order to their pleasure or profit.

Now there is not the twentieth part of this difficulty even in the first cutting off a sinful inclination, or a vitious habit; and indeed men take infinitely more pains for these little trifles, than they need do for heaven.

For as I said before, all the difficulty is in first cutting off our evil habits; when once that is over we are more easy, and the pain wears off by degrees: And the reason why this appears much harder than it is in reality, is, because men are a great while about it, and do not enter upon it with that firmness and constancy of mind, that the matter requires. As the comparison here in my text, imports an evil inclination or habit; must be cut off short all at once, and cast from us by a sudden force and violent resolution; and then as it is in the cutting off our limbs, the extremity of pain is short, and the wound heals by degrees, till at length we have perfect ease. And where men's minds are as intent upon heaven, as they are upon the objects of this world, they actually take this course, and make nothing of the trouble and anguish, which never

never lasts long, if after this they persist and suffer not themselves to be tainted any more. SERM. XXIII.

But when men, as they generally do, attempt this irresolutely and faintly, and are long about it, and but half resolv'd, sometimes intent upon it, and at other times wavering and dubious; then they renew the pain and the difficulty, they are ever in the midst of the greatest hardship and extremity; then it is like trying to cut off the same limb every day, the wound is always fresh, and the pain continues exquisite. This makes the way to Heaven appear so narrow, and the gate so strait; because men are always pressing backwards and forwards, only steping out and into it perpetually, and make little farther progress. Whereas if they would do this, all the business of religion would become pleasant and easy, and vice would be irksome and loathsome to us: So that in truth, the difficulty is not worth a naming in comparison of the advantage it brings us. Let us but secure a firm fixed resolution in our minds, and the body will suffer any thing: *Projice* (says Seneca) *quæcunque cor tuum laniant, quæ si aliter extrahi nequirent, cor ipsum cum illis evellendum est.* Cast away from you with violence whatsoever disorders your heart, and if you have no other way to be rid of it, tear out heart and all. It was a brave expression of the generous resolution of a heathen, and all he proposed by it was no

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more than the preſent eaſe of a man's mind. But how much doth this ſaying of our Saviour's exceed him, who, when he bids us pluck out our eye, adds the reaſon; becauſe it is better to want our eyes here, and enter into the kingdom of God hereafter, than by preſerving both our eyes to be caſt into hell fire.

III. The diſproportion will appear greater yet, if we conſider, that the difficulties of virtue and holineſs are but ſhort; If they were ever ſo great, the enjoyment will infinitely exceed the difficulty of the purchaſe. As I have ſhewn, the trouble and uneaſineſs is over with the firſt violence of our vitious habits; but if it were continued all our lives long, yet, this could bear no proportion to that felicity which ſhall never have an end. When a few days are told here, all the hurry of our life is over; *ſo ſoon paſſeth it away and we are gone:* And yet this *light affliction which can laſt but for a moment, works for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

By the kingdom of God here is meant, that everlaſting ſtate of bliſs, which will be the ſure reward of our virtue and holineſs in this life; and we learn from the text, that our eternal well-being depends upon this ſhort ſpace; and ſince it doth ſo, whatever reſiſtance or oppoſition temptations give us, this conſideration ſhould be always preſent to our minds: How much better it is to undergo trouble and uneaſineſs, than loſe that crown of glory which fadeth not away; a ſtate of joy

joy and felicity, which is uncorruptible unchangeable, and everlasting in the heavens; a state which we know nothing of, as it is in itself; and for that very reason must be exceedingly happy, because we can conceive nothing of it's real nature now. Whatever our trouble is, *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* SERM. XXIII.

And this leads me to the second comparison,

II. Between the pleasures of sin in this life, and the torments of hell hereafter; and the great disproportion between these will appear, if we consider these two things.

I. How little real satisfaction there is, in all the enjoyments of this world: He that made it his business to find out the utmost there was in them, came to the result at last, that they were *vanity and vexation of spirit.* He calls it all *folly and madness,* as being unworthy of rational creatures, and as if all those were out of their wits who pursue them with so much eagerness: Many of them are such as nature blushes at, and is ashamed to own; most of them are nothing but a meer outside, and make us happy only in the opinion of others; when at the same time they are so far from giving us real enjoyment, that perhaps they are a load and burthen to ourselves: And did not the custom of the world raise these unnecessary things into some esteem; and that people could be rid of them without

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out the remarks and reflections of others, they would chuſe to be without them, and throw them away as troubleſome and uneaſy trifles.

All the pleaſure this world affords, beyond the neceſſary ſupplies and conveniencies of nature, is ſo inconſiderable that it is hardly miſt; and nothing makes them agreeable to us but the being uſed to them; nothing but cuſtom and opinion renders many of them tolerable: And if we conſider the matter juſtly, there is no ſuch thing as real and poſitive happineſs in this world; ſince moſt of the enjoyments in it are only the ſupplying the defects of nature, and ridding it from uneaſineſs at the preſent. We eat only to cure the gnawings of an empty ſtomach; we drink to quench the irkſom violence of thirſt; we clothe ourſelves to prevent the pain of cold and nakedneſs; and thus it is in moſt other inſtances: All that we do is not to make us happy, but to prevent a little preſent miſery and uneaſineſs; when we are at the height of all worldly enjoyments: even a pain in our finger ſhall make them all vaniſh like a dream, and rob us of all guſt and reliſh of them; and though there were no interruption from any pain in the body, yet, even in the moſt hardned ſinners, there is ſome remorſe of conſcience always attending the committal of ſin, which palls the enjoyment: Nor are all the pleaſures of this life, in their greateſt purity, comparable to the ſecret complacence and the real poſitive ſatisfaction of mind, which follows

follows the cutting off a ſin, and the conqueſt of a ſtrong temptation; ſo little are they worth buying at the rate of our ſouls, and the being caſt into hell fire. SERM. XXIII.

Alas! how low and mean, and wretched are all thoſe things that are called enjoyments in this world! The gratifying mens brutiſh appetites, a little fine cloaths and equipage, a few meats and drinks extraordinary; the priviledge to ſit, or go before other people; a few glittering titles, and to be called by ſome other name beſides their own; to have their houſe a little larger than others, and many uſeleſs things about them to look at every day; and above all to have a conſiderable ſum of money to leave behind them when they dye. Theſe are the things which go by the name of pleaſure and enjoyment, which people are as fond of as they are of their eyes; daily purchaſe at the price of their ſouls, and will rather be caſt into hell fire than part with them. This is ſuch a degree of folly and madneſs as men will never be thoroughly ſenſible of, till they come to another world; it is as if one ſhould drink a glaſs of deadly poiſon, only that they might taſte the ſweet of it while it is going down: But then they will feel how little it *profits a man to gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul*, and how much better it is to pluck out the eye that offended them, than having two eyes to be caſt into hell fire.

II. If we ſhould ſuppoſe the ſinful pleaſures of this life, to be as great as the moſt corrupt and

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and defiled imagination can repreſent them, yet they will laſt but for a ſhort time; the longeſt is but for the life of the man, and then *this world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof, and all that is in it; the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, and the pride of life* diſappears; then the ſcene changes, and they are ſucceeded by an eternity of woe and miſery; a ſure and certain change! and then the greater their pleaſure was before, the more they *enjoyed of their good things in this life*, the more unſupportable will be that ſtate of miſery, which ſhall never have an end.

Now, the eternity of thoſe torments is the great aggravation, here mentioned, of that woe, which ſhall be the puniſhment of ſin; and of the folly of making ſuch an exchange, by enjoying the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon, to be caſt into hell, where their *worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.*

This was a received form of ſpeaking among the Jews; who as the ſon of Syrach ſays, vii. 17. were generally of an opinion, that the vengeance prepared for the ungodly conſiſted in fire, and worms. The moſt probable account how it came to be ſo was this: Among the Jews, the utmoſt ſeverity they executed upon malefactors for any grievous offence was, not to ſuffer them to be buried after execution; and the place they caſt their dead bodies into, was the valley of Hinnom, a little diſtance from Jeruſalem, where they lay till their fleſh was eaten up of worms, and then their bones

bones were burnt to ashes in a fire kept always there for that purpose; from which fire, together with that supposed to be in the same valley, where the idolatrous Jews burnt human sacrifices to their idols, the extreme punishment of wicked men in another world was usually signified amongst them, by that of fire and worms; and the being cast into a place of torment hereafter, was signified by the being cast into Gehenna, (i. e.) the valley of Hinnom. SERM. XXIII.

Now from hence the words are transferred by our Saviour, to signify the torments of the damned. And

1st, He says their worm shall never dye; which expression hath been used to signify the torments of the mind, as that of fire expresses the punishment of the body; and it aptly represents to us that everlasting remorse of conscience, which shall be the consequence of guilt in another world; shame and remorse and anguish of mind, are the inseparable companions of guilt, and people never fail to find it while they are young sinners, till by habits of sinning it becomes so familiar to them, that in time they wear off all sense of it, and by this means the worm of conscience dies in this world; yet it shall be revived again in the other, where we are told it shall never dye.

How exquisite a punishment this will be, is impossible to conceive, till men come to know what that kingdom of heaven is which they have

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have loſt, and at how great a diſtance their ſins have placed them from God, whoſe preſence alone can make us infinitely happy, and preſerve us from being miſerable; yet there are two things which may help us to ſome notion of it.

I. One is, that compunction of mind, and anguiſh of heart, which every ſincere penitent feels for his paſt ſins; that ſorrow which (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) *works a repentance never to be repented of.* What this is, thoſe alone can be ſenſible of who have felt it; in ſome it is ſo great that it leaves a laſting impreſſion on their minds, it dwells upon their ſpirits; ſo that they can ſcarce be ſaid to enjoy any thing in this world: In the whole courſe of their lives they cannot lift up their eyes to heaven with chearfulneſs; and their greateſt hopes have a mixture of deſpondency. But above all the moſt pungent ſenſe of guilt is that which follows the committal of a ſin, after the ſtrength of the temptation was broke, and after a long confirmed habit of the contrary virtue: This renews the wounds of conſcience, it makes them bleed afreſh, and all before ſeemed but a ſmarting, in compariſon of that raging pain in ſuch a perſon's mind; he hath now many additional degrees of folly to upbraid himſelf with; he is now under the diſpleaſure of God, who was once in his favour: The bitterneſs of his ſoul is ſuch, that his fleſh trembles for fear of God, and he is afraid of his judgments.

Now

Now if the anguish of a truly penitent heart be thus great, while men are in this world, and have it in their power to repent; then what must it be hereafter, when there is no room left for repentance. SERM. XXIII.

II. Another thing, which may help us to conceive what that worm of conscience shall be hereafter, is the fearful condition of persons in despair. I am not inclined indeed to think, that all those persons do indeed despair, who affirm it; nor that the condition of those is desperate who obstinately decline all comfort, and can entertain little or no hope of the mercy of God. While their fears are all on their own side, and they do not abate of their endeavours to amend, others may reasonably conceive good hopes of them, and may justly have entertained a great charity for them, though they will have none for themselves.

Yet it is not unlikely, that even in this life, God may give over a perverse and obstinate sinner, to the malitious insinuations of the Devil, and the lashes of an evil conscience; and perhaps we are not without some terrible instances of such black despair in wicked men, especially near their death; when the grace of God is intirely withdrawn, the time of repentance past, and all degrees of hope entirely cut off, so that the wretch hath nothing left to reflect upon but his sins, and that eternal vengeance that expects him. When a dead and hardened conscience is thus awakened in the last extremity, it is visible how the terrors

of

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of the Lord are let loose upon him; he is then in the gall of bitterness, and this worm of conscience torments him before his time, as if it were in haste to devour him. He raves incessantly of the wrath aud fury of God, of vengeance and damnation; he breathes out nothing but horrid execrations; and scarce names the name of God but to blaspheme.

Rage and madness are terms of peace and mildness to this, insomuch that he scares and confounds all about him; his very silence is full of horrour, and his looks betray a legion of tormentors within. To express compassion would be to mock him; for there is no use of pity from men where there is no hopes of mercy from God.

I must confess all impenitent sinners at their death, have not this amazing sense of guilt, and the vengeance that belongs to it; the nature of their distemper, a sudden violence, and many accidental causes may prevent it; and where there is none of these, the consciences of some sinners are so stupid and benummed that they continue insensible to the last, and go with a sullen silence, into the regions of darkness. But the gnawings of this worm will be more surprizing and never the less fierce and violent in another world; though wicked men feel it not at present; yet like those rotten carcasses in the valley of Hinnom, they are engendering those worms that shall eat though their own bowels; and the fiercest sting of that worm will be the sad

reflections

reflections upon their own madneſs and folly, who for want of bearing a little trouble and uneaſineſs in this world, quitted heaven, and loſt the kingdom of God; and for thoſe ſhort momentary pitiful pleaſures, which did not deſerve the name of ſuch; are now caſt into hell fire. SERM. XXIII.

II. Another aggravation of that future ſtate of miſery is, that their fire is not quenched. This expreſſion of an unquenchable fire, took it's firſt riſe from a fire which conſumed ſo intirely, as to leave no memory or remains of what was caſt into it, as it is ſaid, *Iſai.* xxxiv. 10. Speaking of the deſtruction of Idumea: *He ſays it's fire ſhall not be quenched, night nor day, the ſmoak thereof ſhall go up for ever, from one generation to another it ſhall lye waſte.* So Sodom and Gomorrah are ſaid to be ſet forth as an example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire; (i. e.) a fire which conſumed them, ſo as that they ſhall lie eternally waſte: From hence it became the uſual phraſe, to expreſs thoſe torments of wicked men in another world, which ſhall never have an end. And thus it is uſed by our Saviour in his laſt ſentence upon the wicked, *depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,* and in the 20*th* of the *Rev.* It is called a lake, of fire wherein the wicked ſhall be tormented for ever and ever: And in this ſenſe hell fire is ſaid in the text not to be quenched.

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Now whether it be a real fire or no, is not at all material for us to determine; for if it be, and if the flames of hell are literally to be underſtood, then *who will be able to dwell with everlaſting burnings*? And how dear will the ſinful pleaſures of this world be bought, at ſuch a monſtrous price. Men ſhrink at the thoughts of burning alive, and nature ſtarts at the mention of it; and therefore it is ſtrange that people ſhould have ſuch a mighty dread of fire here, and yet be ſo little moved with the burning for ever hereafter. Nothing can poſſibly be the reaſon of this, but becauſe they do not believe it, or do not conſider it. But whether men have any hearty perſwaſion of the truth of this or no, it is better to part with all the pleaſures of this life, than run ſo great a hazard.

If it be not literally a fire, it is certainly called ſo for want of ſomething on earth more dreadful, and of a pain more exquiſite, whereby to repreſent it, ſo that this inſtead of leſſening the terrour adds extremely to it. Whether it be one or the other, it is ſurely inſupportable and eternal, and therefore as our Saviour ſays here, it is better, infinitely better, to part with all our deareſt ſins, and pluck out the very eye that offends us, and enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be caſt into hell fire, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.

I ſhould now proceed to make ſome obſervations and inferences from this text; but this I ſhall defer to the next opportunity.

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SERMON XXIV.

The duty of plucking out the eye explained.

MARK ix. 47, 48.

And if thine eye offend thee pluck it out: It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be caſt into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

I HAVE already ſpoke to theſe words, which whether they are an anſwer or not to any objection made, or deſigned to obviate one which might reaſonably be expected, yet, they ſuppoſe the duties our Saviour had been diſcourſing of, to be of ſome difficulty and uneaſineſs. But though they are hard, yet he ſhews in theſe words that they are neceſſary and poſſible, if men will do as much for the innocence of their ſouls, as they ordinarily do for the health of their bodies. SERM. XXIV.

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And he teaches us here how much it concerns us to undergo ſome trouble and uneaſineſs, and quit ſome preſent pleaſure or profit, in order to virtue and holineſs. For it is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be caſt into hell fire. So that here we have theſe two things,

1ſt, The hardſhip and difficulty of virtue on one ſide, laid againſt the joys of heaven on the other. And,

2dly, The pleaſures of ſin in this life, are compared with the torments of hell hereafter.

In each of theſe I carried on the compariſon, and ſhewed the great diſproportion between them, and conſequently the folly of thoſe who take up with the preſent pleaſures, and decline the trouble and uneaſineſs of virtue. From thence I proceeded to conſider, the two aggravations of thoſe infernal puniſhments ſignified here, by that of their worm not dying, and their fire not being quenched.

And therefore, having already ſpoke to what was more expreſly contained in the words, and more immediately intended by our Saviour who ſpoke them; becauſe they ſeem to be of farther uſe and inſtruction to us all, I ſhall here make ſome of thoſe obſervations and inferences, which follow eaſily from them.

I. The firſt thing I ſhall obſerve to you from the words is, the great condeſcenſion there is to the frail condition of humanity, even

even in the ſtricteſt and moſt ſevere precept of chriſtianity; for by our Saviour's giving the inſtance of mortification and ſelf denial, in cutting off only one of our hands, and plucking out but one of our eyes, he well ſignifies here, that in order to virtue, and the graces of the Goſpel, it is not neceſſary that we quite extinguiſh all our natural inclinations and appetites, but that we moderate and reſtrain them within the due bounds of nature and religion. So that our buſineſs is not utterly to deſtroy, but to rectify them; and this ſeems to be the reaſon of that emphaſis laid upon this expreſſion, as it is in St. Math. *If thy right eye offend thee*, which is an uſual form of ſpeech, to expreſs how dear and valuable a thing is to us, and it imports thus much, that though a ſinful manner of gratifying our natural inclinations, ſhould appear more agreeable and pleaſant to us, than what our religion hath preſcribed, yet we are to check and curb them, and give way to them no farther than is conſiſtent with the law of God. SERM. XXIV.

Were it indiſpenſibly required from us, to cut off both our hands, and pluck out both our eyes, (i. e.) ſo to deface and aboliſh all the inclinations and appetites of nature, that there ſhall be no remains of them left, it were indeed a very hard ſaying, and who could bear it? This is utterly impoſſible to fleſh and blood, for many of them are part of ourſelves, and wholly to root them out, would be ſo far to

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deſtroy our being; ſo that if this were the meaning, we might all ask who then could be ſaved?

But the Goſpel propoſeth to us only, the rectifying all thoſe tendencies of body or mind which follow our being; to curb and reſtrain them from thoſe exceſſes, which they were not originally made for. So that as the Goſple is calculated for the truth and purity of reaſon, ſo it is for the firſt frame and diſpoſition of nature; though it is from God, yet it is a religion for men; and at the ſame time it raiſes us to an imitation of the divine perfections, it doth it by condeſcenſion to the weakneſs, and infirmities of man.

It gives way to the innocent gratification of our natural appetites and inclinations, and there is room left for an innocent enjoyment of all the bleſſings of this Life. So that the ends both of nature and religion may be anſwered; and in caſes even of the greateſt extremity we are to conſult our health and ſafety; *if they perſecute us in one city*, we may *flee to another*, nor are we commanded not to be angry, but not to ſin when we are ſo, and the ſtate of marriage is not only permitted to avoid fornication, but commended and ſaid to be honourable in all.

And therefore thoſe libertines who give way to their luſts upon that principle, and argue the unreaſonableneſs of chriſtianity from this topick, as if it's precepts were a direct contradiction to nature, and therefore required what

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was unreasonable and impossible; they do it out of ignorance of the true nature of virtue, and temper of evangelical holiness; which may be acquired without bereaving ourselves of all worldly satisfaction, and consists in moderating our bodily appetites, restraining the inclinations of our minds, and keeping them within compass, and by governing our passions, and exercising them on proper, and worthy objects. SERM. XXIV.

And this is one thing which distinguishes Christianity, and makes it differ from all other religions, which do commonly run into these extremes either of giving a loose to all mens natural appetites, and driving men on to extreme riot and excess in them, or else to such degrees of restraint as defeat the ends both of nature and religion; insomuch, that their greatest strains of virtue are an unreasonable force upon the mind.

II. Another inference I shall make from these words is, the great necessity of mortifications and self denials in order to a good degree of virtue and holiness; the words of the text do plainly suppose there are some temptations so strong, and importunate, that there is no dealing with them any other way; and that they are unconquerable without using such harships and severities to ourselves, as are here expreſt, by *cutting off a hand*, or *plucking out an eye:* For though christianity doth not oblige us to any unnatural violences upon ourselves, yet, the conditi-

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on of our infirmity is such, and our vitious inclinations are so head-strong and violent, that they will hardly ever be brought under and subdued, without some methods of severity, and such restraints as give us much uneasiness and regret.

It hath been the practice of some people, to decry all mortifications and self denials in any instances whatsoever, which they do by magnifying the grace of God, as if this were powerful enough to renew us thoroughly in body and soul, to heal all the distempers of our corrupted nature, and set us right in all our inclinations and appetites; and they have improv'd this notion so far as to slacken all human endeavours, and bring the necessary means of virtue and holiness into contempt, so that even fasting is looked upon as an useless work of supererogation.

I must confess if they could approve themselves to be holy in all respects, without any thing of this nature, and found that they were strictly upright, and could acquire the virtues of meekness and charity, of temperance and chastity, and devotion, without giving themselves this needless trouble, they would effectually confute both us and the scripture, which frequently recommends these methods of severity and self denial. They are men of like infirmity with ourselves, and we trust we have the spirit of God as well as they, and yet our own experience sufficiently convinces us of the necessity of using those means of virtue, they

they are all but little enough, and it is well we can preſerve our innocency when all is done. SERM. XXIV.

Nor can it be any diſparagement to the grace of God, but for the praiſe and glory of it, that it is powerful enough to prevail with men to put in practice all thoſe means of virtue recommended to us in the holy ſcriptures, and that it gives a bleſſing and ſucceſs to them in the attainment of virtue and holineſs. St. Paul who had miraculous degrees of the ſpirit, and had vouchſafements and revelations beyond any they can pretend to, tells us it was his own practice to keep his body under, and bring it in ſubjection. And to convince us how neceſſary a means of virtue this may be, he adds this reaſon for his ſo doing, *leſt while he preached to others, he himſelf ſhould be a caſt away.* Our Saviour who had the ſpirit without meaſure, yet lived a life of conſtant ſeverity, and ſelf denial, and faſted forty days and forty nights, and bid his diſciples *watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.* And after the Holy Ghoſt had come upon them, faſting and prayer was their conſtant practice. And if after this, theſe perſons will think or ſay, they have leſs occaſion for mortifications and ſelf denial than any of theſe, we muſt leave them to their ſpiritual pride, and in the humility of our Souls, ſet our ſelves to the practice of what the wiſdom of God hath thought neceſſary for

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for us, thus *through the ſpirit to mortify the deeds of the body.*

And as we learn from hence the neceſſity of mortifications and ſelf-denial, which the text ſuppoſes frequently to occur in the courſe of a chriſtian life, ſo we learn likewiſe the true limitation of them; how far they are to be eſteemed and thought neceſſary; and wherein the juſt value of them lies; namely, as far as they are inſtrumental to the prevention of a ſin, or obtaining of a virtue; it is when our eye offends us we are to pluck it out, when it is the occaſion of ſin or hindrance of a virtue; for otherwiſe, where men over-value things of this nature, and lay too great a ſtreſs upon them, conſidered in themſelves without farther regard to the end or deſign of them, they become fooliſh and ſuperſtitious.

By this miſtake men loſe the end, and reſt only in the means, as is manifeſt and viſible in the church of Rome; for to what purpoſe are all thoſe whippings with ſcourges, and laſhing of themſelves; that pageantry of heathen cruelty? What means that ſhunning of the converſation of the world in cloyſters; their pilgrimages, their antique ſhavings, and frightful dreſſes; their hair clothes; going barefoot, with eyes fixt on the ground, and all that ſtrange variety of ill contrived penances; who requires theſe things at their hands? Our Saviour indeed bids us cut off our right hand, and pluck out our right eye when it offends, us (i. e.) to part with

with the deareſt enjoyment in this world, when it is the occaſion of a ſin or the hindrance of a virtue; therefore they will cut off a great many things which do not offend them, and ſpare and cheriſh thoſe things that do; in hopes that their penances ſhall atone for the guilt of thoſe ſins they indulge themſelves in; thus they pervert our Saviour's deſign in this, as they do in all other reſpects; deſtroying the power of godlineſs, and turning all religion into air. SERM. XXIV.

III. Another thing which is evidently implyed in theſe words is, that there is no purging or expiation of a ſin in another life; and that there can be no ſuch place as purgatory, where by undergoing very acute pains, for a limited time, and enduring exquiſite torture in proportion to the greatneſs of mens ſins, or by the prayers of the church which are offered up for them; all their vitious inclinations are cured, and they perfectly cleanſed from the guilt of all their ſins, and in the very ſame diſpoſition for heaven as if they had mortified and ſubdued all their ſinful inclinations in this life.

I ſay it is plain from the text, how there is no ſuch proviſion made in another world, to ſave men the labour of acquiring true virtue and holineſs here; for there is a direct oppoſition here made between the kingdom of God on the one hand, and hell fire on the other, a fire which never ſhall be quenched; and the whole force of what our Saviour ſays here depends upon this ſuppoſition, that there is an unavoidable

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unavoidable neceſſity of mens taking up with one or the other, and that they are for ever to be determined by that choice they make in this world. Whereas upon the principle of the church of Rome in this matter, it is eaſy to evade the force of the dilemma; namely, that we may keep both our eyes in this world, and yet enter into the kingdom of God through purgatory; it is only the being caſt into a place where their worm will dye, and their fire be quenched after a ſeaſon, at leaſt in reſpect of us who ſhall be delivered out of it by the prayers of the ſaints upon earth.

But here we are taught, that men are under a fatal neceſſity, either of entering into the kingdom of God, or of being caſt into a fire which ſhall never be quenched; and that the final iſſue of things in another world will depend upon our cutting off our limbs here, and plucking out our eyes, (i. e.) upon the effectual mortification of all our ſinful appetites and vitious inclinations, while we are in this world; now is the only time of putting ourſelves into a poſture for heaven; and if we ſlip this ſhort ſpace of life, we ſhall never have another opportunity afforded us in all eternity.

And yet how contrary is the doctrine of the church of Rome to this plain and expreſs doctrine of our Saviour, which teaches us, that in caſe men do ſlip their time here, yet there is a farther remedy hereafter; another way of being purged from their ſins, though more painful

painful and troubleſome than that which is here propoſed to us: Upon which groundleſs confidence people omit the practice of all thoſe virtues and graces, that have any thing of trouble or uneaſineſs in the attainment of them, and indulge their vices; ſo ſtrangely are men miſled and deluded, by the opinion they have of others, contrary to their own ſenſe and reaſon: For if they would freely uſe that meaſure of underſtanding they have, inſtead of obſerving this plain expreſs doctrine of our Saviour, they would never give themſelves up to the conduct of thoſe who teach the very reverſe of this precept; and by keeping their people in ignorance, do in effect take away both their eyes, and ſend them blindfold into that fire which ſhall never be quenched.

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4. Another thing I ſhall obſerve to you from theſe words is, that the only ſure and effectual means of overcoming temptation is to cut off all the occaſions and opportunities of ſinning, either to remove the temptation from us, or ourſelves from the temptation; if we ſuffer it near us, it is odds but it will gain upon the ſtrongeſt and moſt ſincere reſolutions: And therefore, our bleſſed Saviour who knew the infirmity of our nature, and the utmoſt of our ſtrength, preſcribes us this as the only expedient in caſes of ſtrong and dangerous temptations; to cut off and caſt away from us any thing that offends us, and is the occaſion of drawing us into a ſin; and the reaſon why the

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the plucking out our eye is given as an instance, is, becauſe it lets all the temptations of the world in upon us; for which reaſon it is ſaid, if thine eye be ſingle thy whole body ſhall be full of light; and yet we muſt part with it though it is one of the tendereſt and moſt ornamental parts of the body.

And this is ſo far from being a hard ſaying, that the only intent of it is to make the practice of virtue and holineſs eaſy to us; it would have been a very hard ſaying indeed, if he had required us to expoſe ourſelves to all manner of temptations, to be ever in the way of them, and yet to reſiſt and overcome them all; if he had commanded us to be always in the midſt of infection, and yet never ſuffer ourſelves to be tainted with it. This perhaps would have been as impoſſible in religion as it is in nature; for many temptations are infectious and catching, and we are naturally diſpoſed to be wrought upon by them as by ſickneſs, and there is a great likeneſs in both with reſpect to us: So that it is eaſy to keep ourſelves from it, but the remedy or cure is very hazardous and uncertain.

So that there is a neceſſity of depriving ourſelves of any enjoyment whatever, though as dear to us as our eyes, if it be the occaſion of ſin to us. Some temptations are of that nature, that they never will be conquered by any other means; if we venture upon them any other way, at the beſt we do but create our-

ſelves

ſelves a great deal of danger and uneaſineſs; and it is ten to one but it gets the better of us at laſt. So that in many caſes we are to ſhun temptation, and fly from it rather than ſtay and encounter it: There is a great deal of chriſtian fortitude in flying; for if I know my frailty to be ſuch, that the preſence of a temptation is too ſtrong for me, I overcome it effectually by keeping out of the way of it, and cutting of all occaſion or opportunity; and though ſome affection or inclination to the ſin may remain, (as people may have a great tenderneſs for thoſe infected limbs they cut off to preſerve their life,) yet if I reſtrain myſelf ſo far as to keep out of the reach of the temptation, which if preſent I have reaſon to fear would be too hard for me, it is but temptation ſtill, and my innocence is preſerved. SERM. XXIV.

Men never gain any thing by daring of their ſpiritual enemies; this vaunting hath commonly as ill ſucceſs in religion as it hath in war; they are not to be met in the field and engaged in a pitched battle, unleſs in extraordinary caſes, where God gives us a warrant and unuſual ſtrength for the fight. Inſtead of engaging them all at once in the field, in their greateſt force, we have more need of prudence, and caution, and foreſight to weaken them by degrees; by guarding all our outworks, preventing their approaches, and keeping them always at a diſtance.

5. Another inference I ſhall make from theſe words is, that no wilful ſins perſiſted in can

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can be of excuſable infirmity; nothing is more ordinary in the world, than for people upon the ſtrength of a lively imagination, and a warm temper, to keep up a great appearance of devotion and piety, though they at the ſame time continue in the practice of wilful and deliberate ſins; and they quiet their conſciences with the hopes, that they are only the unavoidable infirmities of good and regenerate perſons. But let the temptation be what it will, it is abſolutely neceſſary that we ſhould conquer it; for if our hand offends us we muſt cut it off; if our very eye offends we muſt pluck it out; there is nothing ſo dear to us that we muſt not part with to avoid a ſin; no pleaſure ſo great that we muſt not foregoe; and we muſt quit the greateſt worldly enjoyments, which our own experience ſhews us we cannot preſerve without a ſin; this is indiſpenſibly required from us in the words of my text.

And it is certainly in our power to undergo the ſevereſt methods of virtue, and to conquer the ſtrongeſt temptation incident to human nature, if we will but follow our Saviour's directions, and cut off and caſt away from us every thing that is a ſtrong temptation to us; for though it may not be in our power to overcome the temptation, yet, it is certainly in our power to remove it, and this will render us inexcuſable before God. How ſtrong ſoever our natural inclinations to ſin are, we muſt

must suppress and restrain them, and how great soever the temptation is we must overcome it; there is no other condition of salvation, and we are told plainly we cannot enter into the kingdom of God upon any other terms. SERM. XXIV.

No excuse of weakness or infirmity will serve our turn, for the grace of God will be sufficient for us if we use the means; and this is the proper means to cut off the temptation, and remove from us what we are not able to conquer. All pretence of infirmity is shamefully foolish and ridiculous, while people continue the immediate causes and opportunities, and occasions of sinning: This is the true reason of that weakness they complain of, because they will not part with the temptation; they will cherish a snake in their bosom, and then complain they cannot prevent being stung by it.

Let no one therefore encourage themselves in any false hopes of salvation, while they remain in any known sin; for it is certain that he that commits sin is of the Devil, and they that are born of God do not commit sin; there is no pleasure or advantage this world affords, but they are ready to cut off and cast away from them with indignation; and they are ready to part with all that is near and dear to them, for the preservation of innocence and a good conscience.

VI. Another thing I shall observe to you from these words is, that a thorough conquest

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of that temptation which is ſtrongeſt and moſt prevalent with us, is the greateſt evidence of our ſincerity in religion; and indeed the only one upon which we can build any comfortable hopes of heaven: It is true what our Saviour ſays here may be applied to all temptations which aſſault any of us; but however they plainly intimate that ſome one temptation in each perſon is moſt powerful, and that one perſon may have a hand to cut off, and another an eye to pluck out; and he ſeems to lay the greateſt ſtreſs upon that very inſtance of virtue and holineſs which we are apteſt to tranſgreſs; and upon avoiding that very ſin which we are moſt violently tempted to.

It is very common with people to ſay, by way of juſtification of themſelves, as they ordinarily do for other people, that this is my only great failing, and the only infirmity I have not maſtered; I am very well inclined in all other reſpects; and ſince I am not otherwiſe faulty, I hope God in mercy will paſs by this, and accept of my obedience in all other inſtances; eſpecially ſince I do not perſiſt in ſin out of any deſigned contempt: This is too general a deceit, and a prevailing hypocriſy; but it is a fatal one, and will as ſurely cut them off from heaven, as if they were guilty in all other reſpects; for he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole law, he is as liable to condemnation as if he had tranſgreſſed it all.

How

How many more persons would have been saved than there are, if it were not for that one prevailing lust or temptation, which they never can bring themselves to part with, that one sin which they found out several excuses to retain; which they palliated and disguised, and made a thousand useless pretences to bring it under the notion of infirmity, and within the conditions of pardon? But all in vain, there was but one effectual way of dealing with it, and that was what our Saviour here proposes; namely, though it were as dear to them as their limbs to cut it off and cast it from them, it had been much better for them to have done so, than to be shut out of the kingdom of God, and cast into that fire which shall never be quenched. That one sin, for which alone they hoped to be dispensed with, was their trial for heaven; it was by conquering that very temptation that they were to escape damnation: They had resolution enough to do every thing else for heaven, and so far they did well; but one thing more they lacked, that which was in a more especial manner their way of trial; and for want of that one thing all the rest of their religion is but hypocrisy, and all their labour lost. SERM. XXIV.

VII. The last inference I shall make from these words is, that the happiness of heaven, and the misery of hell torments are a motive of obedience strong enough to prevail with men to preserve their virtue and innocence in the most difficult cases whatsoever; they are

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able to make us undergo the greateſt hardſhips, and quit the greateſt pleaſures of this life in order to the practice of virtue and holineſs: For if we weigh the matter rightly we ſhall certainly conclude with our Saviour, that it is better to part with any ſinful pleaſures whatſoever, than loſe heaven and ſuffer eternal miſery for it; and if we conſider this motive enough, it could never fail to work it's effects upon us. So that men have nothing more to do but to perſuade themſelves that they have ſuch an intereſt at ſtake, to be thoroughly convinced of the truth and certainty of it.

Nor is it enough that people barely believe the rewards and puniſhments of another life; for even of thoſe who yield a hearty aſſent to the truth of theſe things, how few are there that are wrought up by them? Becauſe they do not ponder and conſider them enough, ſo as to make them ever preſent to their minds, till their hearts are deeply affected with them, and that they are as feelingly touched by the thoughts and mention of them, as they are by any preſent danger that threatens the body. If men would do this, nothing could poſſibly influence our hopes and our fears more powerfully, inſomuch that no one perſon whatever who thinks of them enough could ever miſcarry.

The word of God is quick and powerful, and the terrors of the Lord are of ſufficient force to perſuade men; if they will ſet their minds

minds that way, and yield themſelves to be perſwaded; otherwiſe theſe motives will loſe all their virtue and efficacy, and be in reſpect of us as if there were no ſuch things. Now nothing can conduce more to the making of us do this, than thoſe two conſiderations the text ſuggeſts to us. SERM. XXIV.

I. Firſt that miſery, everlaſting miſery, is the ſure and neceſſary conſequence of unrepented guilt, for the cuſtom or habit of any ſin, like a ſpreading gangrene in any of our limbs, if it be not cut off and forſaken, proceeds till at laſt it becomes incurable and brings certain death. Every wilful ſin you are guilty of and perſiſt in, forfeits heaven and puts you into a ſtate of damnation: And beſides, nothing can be a greater evidence of that everlaſting ſting and horror of conſcience, than the remorſe which ever accompanies guilt in this world; for no man would have any regret at the committal of a ſin, if it were not for ſomething within, that ſuggeſts a future vengeance, that tells him they who do ſuch things ſhall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God, and that the wicked, and all that forget God ſhall be turned into hell. And,

II. That the one or the other of theſe two things muſt unavoidably be the final condition of every man; there is no middle ſtate, eternal happineſs, or everlaſting miſery muſt be your lot; and therefore expect one or the other, and reckon upon it as your inheritance for ever. It would aſtoniſh moſt of us if we

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knew how soon it would be determined; and that we shall be sealed up irreversibly to one of them: The day will come as surely, as if it were to morrow; perhaps there may be but a few hours between, when you must either enter into the kingdom of God, or else be cast into hell fire, which shall never be quenched.

And therefore God of his mercy grant, that we may lay this to heart in time; that we may never come into that place of torment, where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth to all eternity.

SERMON

SERMON XXV.

On our change at the resurrection.

PHILIP. iii. 20, 21.

For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

THESE words of St. Paul have a peculiar force and significancy in the original, which cannot be easily expressed in any other language. And it is very observable, that whenever he does but touch upon this subject, of the change our bodies are to undergo at the last day, he is warmed in an instant; his stile swells, and he can hardly speak of it but in rapture. In the 15th of his 1 Cor. where he enlarges upon it, he outdoes himself; and is carried on to a height of eloquence, SERM. XXV.

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which never yet was unparalled, The substance of which he sums up towards the close, *behold I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed: For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

In speaking to these words, I shall crave leave to consider the several particulars contained in them, in the same order the lye in the text before us. Accordingly,

I. The first thing to be observed is, that in them we have a clear and full account of the hope of Christians; and that too in direct opposition to those, *who mind earthly things.* who are given up to the pleasures of sense and appetite, who have their minds so taken up with the things of this life, that all their desires and affections are that way; insomuch that things of another world have lost all force of perswasion and influence upon them: And are no more the governing principle of their life and actions, than if they were altogether feigned and imaginary.

This sort of people he had described exactly in the foregoing verse, but as for us, says he, *we on the contrary look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* Look for him, (i. e.) have our eye fixed upon him, and our hearts set upon his coming. This expectation is our whole dependance, it is our all; it is this alone hath full possession of our hearts, it fills our thoughts, and the main tendency of our whole life and actions is all that way.

And

And now we ſee the reaſon of that ſolemnity in this expreſſion of the Apoſtles, uſing theſe four names, the Saviour, the Lord, and Jeſus, and Chriſt. Becauſe the text is leveled at ſuch as had but a low and contemptible opinion of him, and his Revelations: And the plain import of it is, that, that very perſon called Jeſus Chriſt, ſo much deſpiſed and neglected by ſuch people as he had been deſcribing, we own to be our Saviour, and our Lord: This is the very man we look for. And we depend ſo entirely upon him, that we *live by faith and not by ſight. Looking for that joyful day, when he ſhall come in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory.* SERM. XXV.

II. The next thing remarkable in the text is, that debaſing epithet, *our vile body.* The Greek expreſſeth it much more emphatically by a Hebrew idiom, σῶμα τῆ ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν, the body of this low abject condition of ours, in this life: So that he doth not call it vile only in reſpect of thoſe many defects and miſeries to which it is now ſubject, but means that it is ſo even in it's beſt ſtate, and when it appears to moſt advantage in the bloom of youth, and greateſt gaiety of health and vigour. It is true this amuſes us now, becauſe we are acquainted with nothing better; and it becomes agreeable only by compariſon, when we obſerve the little differences of ſhape and colour in others, who are in truth only a little leſs deformed.

The

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The body was without doubt very excellent in it's first design, when newly formed; when God viewed the work of his hands, and we pleased him; and he could call us good. Yet even in that state of innocence it had imperfections which required a change, before it could be translated up into heaven.

But in the ruin of our nature by the fall, the body sunk into a wretched and despicable condition, subject to numberless diseases and infirmities; insomuch that all our care in this world, is only to supply the several defects of nature; to support this tottering fabrick. To stave off that corruption, which is every hour seizing us: And when the soul hath left it, it turns all to stench and rottenness; it sends out poison and infection; and quickly becomes the most loathsom and odious thing in nature.

The Heathen had so contemptible a notion of the body, that they called it the sepulchre of the soul; they imagined the soul confined to it by way of punishment. The resurrection of it, by way of derision, they called the hope of worms. And looked upon the rising again of such a body as this is, to be a nauseous and abominable thought, unworthy of God. What! says Celsus in Origen, 'that e-'ver God should raise so foul and odious a 'thing as a dead carcass!' thus they erred, *not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*

III. But thirdly, another thing expressly asserted in the text is, that notwithstanding this

this mighty alteration, it will be the same body still, and not another. And now we see the reason why the Apostle used a Hebrew idiom on this occasion, namely, the more effectually to prevent and obviate that imagination, of our having other bodies at the last day, instead of these; and composed of celestial matter. Who shall change this body of our present low dejected state, (i. e.) the very body we carry about us, in this vale of misery. SERM. XXV.

It is here plainly called a change; and lest we should mistake, and fancy it a change of one body for another, the original says, it shall be only transformed; a word always in use where the substance remains, and a thing is changed only in it's form and figure: Which is the very thing spoke here at length, for in the original it is, that this body may have the same form or figure with the body of Christ.

The spirit of God foreseeing there would in time arise a sort of men, who should elude the doctrine of the resurrection by this wrong turn; hath thus plainly, and with design been so particular in direct opposition to them; not only in this text, but in all other places where this change is spoke of. Our blessed Saviour, who is the earnest, and standard of our resurrection, rose again before his body was in any degree corrupted; and it was so literally the same, that it retained the very marks of the wounds he had received, before the separation of it from the soul.

But

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But what is there so contrived even by the wisdom of God, which the mind of man cannot pervert to it's own destruction!

IV. And now I come to the fourth and main point of the text, which is a revelation peculiar to Christianity; namely, that this change of our bodies, shall be into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. We are told expressly in another place, where this change is spoke of, that *it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* And it is plainly implied, that we are not to hope for any knowledge of this likeness, till the coming of Christ at the last great day, when we shall be actually possest of it; So that it is in vain to go about to form any notion of it. We have not the least glimpse or idea of that glorified body we shall be like; it is as much out of the reach of all human understanding, as the real perfections of the divinity; for which reason it is said, that our *life is hid with Christ in God.*

Here then we are at a full stand, we have gone the length of our line, we frankly own our ignorance; and that what is farther incumbent upon us is, with a full trust and confidence in the power and wisdom of God, to wait for such a change as we have no conception of.

And now the matter is thus reduced to a point, by this concession; are we to yield and give up the cause to the *disputer of this world?* No when we seem to give the enemies of revelation all the advantage they could

could wish, by acknowledging ourselves at the utmost stretch and period of human understanding; we shall now set out again, and launch into that immense field of knowledge opened to us by the revelations of the Gospel; that those men may see how this *foolishness of God is wiser than men.* SERM. XXV.

And therefore in this one instance, let us observe the true nature of all the other mysteries of the Gospel.

Behold I shew you a mystery, says St. Paul, *we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* Now it is revealed to us that these bodies of ours shall receive such a mighty alteration in the resurrection, it is what we all understand; it is very easy and obvious; and yet plain as it is now, all the wit of man and utmost imagination could not have found it out; and nothing but a revelation from Heaven can convince us of the truth and certainty of it. And here is our faith, that we believe a thing we so well understand, upon the testimony of him, that reveals this doctrine to us.

Again, the same St. Paul says with respect to this change, that *it doth not appear what we shall be.* This is the other part of that same mystery, which is yet in the dark and unrevealed. And herein is our faith and our hope, that we look for this change and have our whole dependance upon it, though we have no capacity at present to frame the least thought or conception of it.

And

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And here is that faith, and that knowledge put together with respect to the same mystery, which the wise men of this world have made such a noise about, and laboured to represent as inconsistent.

Thus we see how that which hath taken the colour of an objection, is in truth the transcendent excellency of Christianity. That it carries the mind beyond it's present sphere of knowledge; and raises our hopes in another world, to something that we neither do nor can know; and which it *cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive.* It is this alone which makes it a powerful motive to virtue and goodness; and of weight and influence enough to restrain the headstrong appetites, and unruly passions of human nature. For alas! all that we can have a notion of in this world, is too low for our hopes. But when we are to expect a change of our bodies, which can be no otherwise represented to us now, than that it will be like that of Christ's; this enlarges the mind of man, gives it full scope, and fills the vast ambition of our souls.

And why? because the reason given why we cannot form any conception of this likeness, is because we have no capacities for it in this world. *When He shall appear, we shall be like him,* (says St. John,) *for we shall see him as he is,* (i. e) by having all our faculties enlarged and exalted, we shall be rendered capable of that beatifick vision. In the mean time, we take the same method in thinking and

and ſpeaking of it, that we do of all other things of another world: Firſt, by conſidering what it is not, removing from it all the imperfections of our preſent ſtate, and then repreſenting it by the greateſt ideas our imaginations are ſtockt with, and choiceſt reſemblances this world can afford. Though when all is done, we ſpeak in the language of children; and we ſhall never be able to think of it, as it really is in itſelf, till that great day, when there ſhall be a *manifeſtation of the ſons of God.* SERM. XXV.

We are, in ourſelves naturally very aſpiring, the mind of man is framed to great and lofty thoughts; and yet we are ſo far from being limited or reſtrained in our hopes of this glorious change, that the divine revelations do not only cheriſh and encourage them; but they carry them on yet farther, even vaſtly beyond our moſt elevated imaginations.

This likeneſs of Chriſt which we are told we ſhall reſemble, is no leſs than that of the divinity it ſelf. He is called *the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon.* Which doth not come up to the word in the original, for that implies the full and perfect tranſcript of the living God. And again it is ſaid that *in him dwells all the fullneſs of the God-head bodily:* Which can mean nothing leſs, than that his body now partakes of the glorious perfections of the divine nature. Thus high are our hopes raiſed by the Goſpel, even

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even to a likeness of God himself, that fountain of all perfection. There is no check given to our ambition, short of a resemblance of the divinity; and here the mind must stop, since there is nothing greater to be wished for either in this world or the next.

That very image of God which the angels lost, is to be confered upon us; and if this had not been so plainly revealed to us, the first thought of it would have struck the mind with terror: And what we are now so much encouraged to hope for, would have appeared to us like the blasphemy of Lucifer, whose crime was, that he would have ascended and *been like the most high.*

So that after this, we may give the utmost loose to our imaginations; leave the mind to dilate itself; and let the fancy traverse over all the beauties of the visible creation, it shall find nothing to compare with what it shall be itself. For our bodies to put on the brightness of the firmament, and outshine the sun and stars; is indeed a dazling thought! but alas! what is all this to a resemblance of that stupendous being? And what are all the colours of the rainbow, or glowing of a great ball of fire, to that *eternal weight of glory which shall be, one day, revealed in us.*

We are in no danger of exceeding; let us say what we will of this mighty change, we are sure to come short. And therefore what we have to do is, to think and speak the best we

we can of it, from the light of nature assisted by those revelations that are afforded us. SERM. XXV

Accordingly we are told that this *mortal shall put on immortality*: (i. e.) The body shall then be framed into a temper disposed for endless duration; subject to no principle of decay in itself, nor to any violence from abroad; so that no power either from within or without, (excepting only that which is almighty,) shall be able to disorder or destroy the glorious creature. The union of soul and body will be so intire and complete, and they shall be so much the same, that they shall never more be liable to dissolution. Nay, perhaps the distinction of soul and body will cease; both substances be wrought up into one undistinguished essence, and so *mortality shall be swallowed up of Life.*

Again it is said, *this corruptible shall put on incorruption:* (i. e.) all imperfections both natural and moral, which we now labour under, shall quite disappear; we shall be purged from all those gross and impure qualities, which clog our nature, and render us a burden to ourselves. We shall be perfectly cleansed *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*; these two shall no more be *contrary, the one to the other*: All contention between them shall cease, and they shall be united in perfect harmony and agreement. Their inclinations and tendencies will be all one way, insomuch that even in the body, there will not be the least reluctance to the greatest goodness. Thus

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ſhall it be adorned with *the beauty of holineſs*, not with that virtue which is acquired by habit. No, we ſhall be pure and holy by the internal rectitude of our nature; and this ſhall be more the temper and diſpoſition of our bodies, than vice and wickedneſs is now; by which means we ſhall be as ſecurely good, as if we were neceſſarily ſo.

Another epithet by which this change is deſcribed is, that *it ſhall be a ſpiritual body*.

It is true, we know not what a ſpirit is, and therefore cannot tell wherein this reſemblance of it will conſiſt. However, though the body will have many perfections which we cannot now conceive, yet certainly it will want none of thoſe we can; therefore, it muſt mean what firſt occurs to our thoughts, namely, that the body ſhall be rendered capable and apt for all the operations of the mind. That whereas it is now tied down to this little globe of earth, it ſhall then be raiſed above all the laws of nature, which we are acquainted with; expatiate into the world of ſpirits; and be fitted for a communication with the univerſe.

Whereas the body is now unequal to the powers of the mind, ſo as to check and obſtruct it's nobleſt and moſt vigorous efforts; it will then promote and forward thoſe operations of the ſoul, which it now obſtructs; and contribute to render them more excellent and admirable: Inſomuch that we ſhall act with the ſame pleaſure and freedom, as if we were all ſpirit.

Whereas

Whereas it is now under confinement and restraint, it shall then be sprightly and unconfined; we shall then move with the same ease we think; and the body shall be quick enough even for the will. SERM. XXV.

Accordingly we read, that we shall no sooner find ourselves thus happily transformed, but we shall immediately take our flight. The Apostle tells us whither, *To meet the Lord in the air*, when he shall descend *with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God.*

It is said indeed *we shall be caught up in the clouds*; but this is by the same figure that they are called the chariots of God. We shall be with him in the instant he appears, with a motion quick enough to prevent our wishes. And when the solemnity of that great and terrible day is over; we shall mount with our Saviour into the highest heavens; that vast and boundless space: And go in *to possess the kingdom:* That kingdom which was *prepared for us before the beginning of the world.*

V. That this change shall be effected by the mighty power of Christ. It is *the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*, whom we look for, that shall change our vile body, *according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* Here is plainly Almighty power attributed to him; and that which renders this more remarkable is, that this is the very form of speaking which is used of God the Father, *Eph.* i. 19, 20. with re-

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spect to the raising of Christ from the dead. And he shall do this great work by that omnipotent power, *whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*, (i. e.) whereby he can make even dust and ashes, death and corruption, turn to this great account; and render them thus signally instrumental to his own glory, and our great advantage.

And who are they that will take upon them to set bounds to that power which is infinite? He that made a human body out of the dust of the earth; who made that dust out of nothing, and afterwards united it to the Divinity; what must we think of them, who undertake to say, that hitherto he can refine matter, and no farther? Is it not better to wait with faith and humility to see what God can make of us. Certainly we shall be a *building*, as the Apostle calls it, worthy the art of God, at a time when he undertakes to shew how fine a structure he can raise out of these gross materials. And this is so far from having any difficulty in it with respect to him; that we are told this astonishing work shall be performed *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.*

Having thus gone through the particulars in the text, I shall only make the same application of it which the Apostle here doth, namely, to oblige us all to have *our conversation in heaven*: Which he would urge upon our consciencies from his own example; and which

which is indeed the main deſign and purpoſe of this revelation. By that expreſſion he plainly intimates to us two things. SERM. XXV.

1. That virtue and holineſs here, is a neceſſary diſpoſition for this glorious change hereafter: That if we would be like God hereafter, we muſt attain ſome likeneſs of him here. This is the conſtant ſtyle of ſcripture, wherever the appearing of Chriſt, and this change is ſpoke of: As in 1 John iii. 3. *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf; even as he is pure.* I choſe to inſtance in this one only, becauſe the reaſon here given why we ſhould endeavour to be pure and holy is, becauſe God is ſo; which plainly implies, that purity and holineſs are neceſſary in the very nature of the things, to render us capable of that image of God; and puts the whole man into a poſture, fitted to receive a likeneſs of that immaculate ſpirit: This is that ſeal of the living God, in the Revelations, with which the ſervants of God are ſaid to be marked. This future glory is founded in grace, and they both receive their improvements gradually in the ſame proportions; the change is now beginning in this life; the holy ſpirit is already forming us to this likeneſs of himſelf; and every virtue, and every grace we acquire, there is ſo much of the divine nature tranſcribed upon ours; and the greater degrees of them we attain, we ſhall ſhine with greater luſtre in another world.

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The case of the wicked is quite the reverse; it is said, they *shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt*, which expression being, in Daniel 12. opposed to those who *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament*, shews, that their change shall be quite contrary, into the likeness of the Devil. Vice and wickedness have a direct tendency, even in this life to wrest our lineaments. Anger, when it rages gives the visage a frightful aspect, envy, hollows and contracts the features; and no imagination can paint out the horror of a despairing look: Racks and tortures cannot distort the face to so much terror and amazement, as that remorse of conscience in a resolute sinner, when he hath before him a certain prospect of damnation, and no hope of mercy. This will disclose itself yet more in another world; when the wicked shall appear in their own eyes, the most detestable and loathsome of all beings; terrified with their own deformity, and racked with indignation at themselves.

Whereas we see virtue and goodness hath a quite different effect, the calmness of the soul displays itself with serenity in the looks; it settles the countenance, and forms all our lines to the sweet and easy air of innocence; insomuch that the joys and transports of the mind have been visible, even under the pangs and agonies of death; which are in truth no other than the faint glimmerings of eternal light.

2. The

2. The other thing which is implied in having our converſation in heaven is, that we raiſe our minds to a full aſſurance and lively hope of this ſurpriſing change, into the likeneſs of the glorious body of Chriſt; having our heart and our affections ſet upon that great day, and *looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* Till this becomes the great prevailing motive with us; the ſtrongeſt bent of our minds; and able to influence our whole life and actions to ſuch a degree of virtue and holineſs, that we ſhall long for his coming with impatience: Nay, till it becomes the joy of our hearts, and that we can breathe out from the humility and faith of a pious ſoul, *even ſo come Lord Jeſus*, and *be it unto us according to thy holy word.* SERM. XXV.

The Apoſtle, in 1 Theſ. iii. 18. giving a particular account of that great day, and how *the dead in Chriſt* ſhould *riſe firſt*; he adviſes them to *comfort one another with theſe words:* Accordingly let us do ſo. Nothing but want of faith, or of a true repentance, can deprive us of this unſpeakable comfort.

Now are we the ſons of God, and *joynt heirs with Chriſt. The glory that thou gaveſt me*, ſays he, *I give unto them*; and that we read was the glory he had with God *before the world was.* How then ſhall we be filled with tranſport, to behold our Saviour's body in the glory of God; and our own in the glory of Chriſt's? The change will be ſo ſurpriſing,

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that we shall then wonder at the low and narrow thoughts we have of it now.

Our imaginations cannot paint out to us any creature so rare and beautiful, so lovely and admirable, as the body of a saint will be at the resurrection. The finest personage upon earth, is but a dark and gloomy shade to it. Imagine a human creature in the most exact symmetry and proportion of all its parts; with a fairness beyond the light, and a complexion exceeding the gayest pride of art and nature; clothe it with the brightest beams of the sun; then add to all this whatever the most extravagant imagination can fancy; after all, this creature of our brain comes as short of that workmanship of God, as a lump of earth doth of the sun. And if we were, in this life, capable of the least glympse or idea of it, we should be ashamed of our ignorance, and blush at the comparison; one such glorious appearance would now confound us; and we should be apt to worship our fellow-creature.

It will be a being of that unconceivable sweetness, and marvellous aspect, that God himself shall be pleased with it. He will see so much of himself in us, that he cannot but love us; and it must please him, to see the work of his hands so much improved beyond the first design: For then, like the original standard, we shall be disposed for glory and happiness in ourselves, so as not to be beholden to any outward ornament: No, our perfections will be all internal and essential to us; this

this glory will iſſue from within, and we ſhall be an everlaſting fountain of rays: We *ſhall ſhine as the ſtars in the firmament*; only with this difference, that they are now obſcured by the greater light of the ſun; but we ſhall ſhine *forth in the kingdom of the Father*, and appear glorious even in the preſence of God. SERM. XXV.

Let us therefore *wait all the days of our appointed time, till our change comes.* Though it doth not *yet appear what we ſhall be*; let us *poſſeſs our ſouls in patience*; and ſtay but a *little while*, and we ſhall *ſee him*, him whom we look for. He is only gone before to prepare a place for us; where all the rays of that ſtupendous being ſhall not only be viſible; but ſhall be ſo far diffuſed through our whole nature, that we ſhall become intellectual light all within, and radiant brightneſs all without.

Yes, we ſhall; and therefore in a full aſſurance of this change, let us bleſs the holy name of God, *who hath begotten us to this lively hope, through Jeſus Chriſt:* Let it be the ſubject of our meditation, of our wiſhes and deſires; and let it make ſuch a deep impreſſion upon our hearts, that it may be a motive powerful enough to draw us off from the ſinful pleaſures of this life; and ſpur us on to the attainment of thoſe virtues and graces, which are the ſeeds of Glory. And ſince it is never to be attained to, without the habitual practice of virtue and holineſs, I ſhall end with theſe words of the Apoſtle, 1 Tim. vi. 13.

I charge

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I charge you all in the sight of God, who quickens all things; that you keep his commandments without spot, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Which in his time he shall shew; who is the blessed and only potentate; the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Who only hath immortality; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who no man hath seen, nor can see. To whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXVI.

On the Day of Judgment.

REVEL. XX, 12.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

THESE words are part of a vision seen by St. John, wherein was represented to him the solemnity of the last great day of accounts. They are a lively prophecy, and very particular description of a general judgment, which in scripture is usually represented by the formality of courts of judicature among ourselves; as being the most lively emblem of it, and the aptest to make impressions on our minds. And therefore it is said, in the verse before this text, That he *saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it; from whose face the*

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the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them; which is a short and elegant description of a new state of things: and then it follows, that he *saw the dead both small and great stand before God*, i. e. before Christ, who is God. John v. 22, 23, for *the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*

The several particulars of this solemnity are spoken of in a figure, in condescension to our present way of thinking; but the whole substance of them will prove nevertheless literally true. And it ought to affect us the more, because we are now able to conceive them by resemblance only and similitude. For the true reason of this is, because our limited understanding in this life is not capable of so much joy or so much terror as the reality shall occasion; this we must wait for till our change comes. However in the mean time this is a very obvious consequence, that if these things are so apt to affect us in the resemblance only, and at a distance; then what must they do in the reality, and when they are present.

This description of a day of judgment is so natural and agreeable to the best understanding of men, that now it is revealed to us, nothing is more easy of belief; because it falls in with the reason and practice of mankind, who, if they will allow any universal judgment, must own this to be a probable account of it.

I shall

I ſhall conſider the ſeveral things contained in theſe words in this order: SERM. XXVI.

I. I ſhall explain what theſe books are which are here ſaid to be opened.

II. Who are meant by the *dead ſmall and great*, who are ſaid to ſtand before God.

III. What thoſe works are which are ſaid to be written in the books, according to which men ſhall be judged.

As to the firſt, the books here ſpoken of are of two ſorts.

1. Thoſe books which contain the laws of God.

2. Thoſe books in which are contained all the violations and tranſgreſſions of thoſe divine laws.

1. Thoſe which contain the laws of God are, 1. The book of the laws of nature written in our hearts; 'tis that innate ſenſe of good and evil interwoven with our frame, which qualifies us for a judgment to come; namely, becauſe we are able to reaſon of righteouſneſs, and temperance, and chaſtity, and all other moral virtues, ſo as to determine what things are in their own nature *honeſt*, what things are *juſt*, what things are *pure* and lovely, and of good report; and in ſhort, what things are virtuous, and praiſe-worthy. Our finding within us a power of diſtinguiſhing between virtue and vice, and ſetting them in oppoſition one to the other from the force of our underſtanding, even contrary to the violent tendency of our corrupt appetites and affections, is inſtead

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ſtead of a thouſand arguments, to ſhew that the difference between them is eſſential and eternal; and that a time muſt come, when all the degrees of them will become conſpicuous, either in the great improvement, or depravation of human nature. This ſhould make all people have a great regard to the dictates of natural conſcience, and to the practice of all moral virtues; and they who neglect or deſpiſe theſe, under any pretence or notion of a ſtrong faith, or a more refin'd and exalted piety, to their great amazement, will find themſelves come ſhort in a main part of their account in the day of judgment.

2. The Holy Scriptures is that other book of laws which ſhall be opened for the tryal of all that ever had the opportunities of the Goſpel, thoſe oracles of God which were given by inſpiration; which are profitable for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, which contain the whole counſel of God, and are able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation; and wherein we have the whole diſpenſation of God towards mankind, from our firſt creation to the laſt great day of accounts. Theſe carry in themſelves ſuch evidence of their divinity, that 'tis ſufficient to convince all who are at the trouble to conſider them with humility and ſincerity; inſomuch, that the moſt profeſſed and poſitive deiſt will be left without excuſe, when he comes to be tryed for his infidelity. They will all then ſee that there *is no other name under heaven given, where by they may be ſaved, but that of the Lord Jeſus*

Jesus Christ. And that *he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved*, and that *he that believeth not, shall be damn'd.* SERM. XXVI.

Nor can their condition be much better, who now believe the Scriptures to be the very word of God, and yet omit the constant reading and understanding of them. For men to allow that they set life and death before us; that the true will of God is revealed in them; and that they shall surely one day be acquitted or condemned eternally, as they frame their lives and conversations by them; and yet hardly ever mind them when they are read, or look into them themselves; when at the same time they are intent upon such books as gratify their curiosity or pleasures, is a folly no way to be accounted for, but from the lamentable stupidness and infatuation of human nature.

O! did they but consider how this book will, at the last great day, be produced as the *Glorious Gospel of the blessed God*; and laid open to upbraid their stupidness and contempt of that inestimable treasure; and how it will be *more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah* in the day of judgment, than for such as did neglect and despise so great salvation; they would study them day and night; *when they sit in their houses, or walk by the way; when they lie down, and when they rise up.*

2. The second kind of books intended more directly in this text are, such wherein the violation of those laws of God are registred. 'Tis in allusion to these books that those expressions

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preſſions are ſpoke, Col. ii. 24. *forgiving our treſpaſſes by blotting out the hand writing that is againſt us.* And again where we are bid to repent, that our *ſins may be blotted out*, which tho' they are ſpoken in condeſcenſion to our capacities, and after the manner of men; and that we know not the true nature of thoſe divine records, yet we may reaſonably conclude, that there are thoſe four ſeveral ways of recording the actions of men.

1. By the *omniſcience* of God, whoſe *eyes* are ſaid to be in *every place beholding the evil, and the good*, and Jer. ii. 19, upon *all the ways of the ſons of men*, there is nothing in Scripture more frequently mentioned, and urged after a more lively and affecting manner, than the particular notice God takes of all our thoughts, words and actions, and the reaſon aſſigned is, that he might give *to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* So that all this exact and unerring knowledge of our ways by that all-ſeeing Eye, being only in order to a future judgment, and general retribution; we may conclude that every minuteſt circumſtance of guilt, with all its aggravations, are recorded in the unbounded mind of God, which comprehends all things. He who knows all our thoughts, long before they are conceived, can never forget them when they are paſt; and He who ſo long before *ordained* thoſe *good works* that we ſhould *walk* in; and in the *volume* of whoſe *book* was written from eternity, that whole

whole will of God which Chriſt came to ful- SERM.
fil; keeps as ſure a regiſtry of the performance XXVI.
of thoſe works, and of our failure in the diſ-
charge of them, Nay, we think meanly of
God, when we imagine any thing is paſt, or
to come in reſpect of him with whom there is
no *variabl neſs*, or *ſhadow of turning*, or ſuc-
ceſſion of time. From whence 'tis plain, that
as we are now as much in the immediate pre-
ſence of God as if we ſaw him, ſo all that he
now beholds in us will be as preſent to him at
the time of tryal, as they were the firſt minute
they were tranſacted.

2. But ſecondly, 'tis not enough for the ma-
nifeſtation of God's juſtice, that He himſelf
will then have a perfect knowledge of the ſins
of men: but that ſinners might acknowledge
the juſtice of their condemnation, they muſt
themſelves have an exact remembrance of all
their ſins; and therefore by one of theſe books
muſt be meant, the *conſciences* of men, which
take a nice account of all our ſins, and book
them down in the order they are committed.
That ſecret remorſe and clamour within us,
which is the inſeparable companion of guilt,
is a certain ſign that our ſins will come to light
ſome time or other; for otherwiſe, why
ſhould we find any uneaſineſs at what can ne-
ver be diſcover'd or known to any one elſe?
And on the other hand, if a man is innocent,
he finds comfort within, tho' the whole world
accuſe him; now there can be no reaſon for
this, but becauſe a day will come, when they
ſhall be all undeceived, and his innocence

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cleared to all mankind. This regret on the one hand, and peace of mind on the other, ariſes only from the exact knowledge we have of what paſſes in our ſelves; and that is conſcience, an unerring, faithful witneſs, within us. 'Tis true, the tranſgreſſions of habitual ſinners, are ſo numerous, that were they ever ſo willing, it is impoſſible for them in this life, to recollect and retain them all. But tho' the remembrance of mens ſins, wears off as they are ſucceeded by new ones; and tho' men ſin on, till they are *paſt feeling*, and have no remorſe left; yet we are to look upon our conſciences as part of ourſelves, and therefore in the laſt great change, when the whole man will revive, he will then appear to be all that ever he was, and will become in one inſtant, what he had ever been in every moment of his life; and thus the conſcience, will lay before the ſinner, one general view of all that ever he committed, and give in its evidence to a tittle. 'Tho he is *dead* in ſin, yet his conſcience is awake; when it is moſt ſilent, it takes the ſharpeſt notice; the leſs it ſpeaks, the more intent it is in taking an account of all the hidden motions of the ſoul; and it does not ceaſe to be a *witneſs*, when it leaves off to be a *monitor*. It is neceſſary that God ſhould have ſuch a witneſs within us, that men being condemned by no other evidence but themſelves, He *might be juſtified in his ſayings, and clear when he is judged*, clear even by their own confeſſion; and that they might for ever own and acknowledge

acknowledge the juſtice of that irreverſible ſentence, whereby they are doomed to everlaſting puniſhment. But, SERM. XXVI.

3. It is not ſufficient that God knows all the ſins of men, nay, and that men ſhall then have an inward conviction of the guilt of them in themſelves; but it is further neceſſary for the juſtification of God's attributes, that all the ſins of men be known to every body elſe; and therefore, there muſt be another way of recording the ſins of men, a way, which ſhall render them viſible to all orders of intelligent beings, men and angels, that all might know thoſe crimes, for which the wicked undergo ſuch a dreadful ſentence, and are neceſſarily conſign'd over to endleſs and unſupportable torments. And that can be no other than the very nature of the ſins themſelves, which have all a tendeney to diſpoſe men for inconceivable deformity in the laſt great change. All the motions and ſentiments of our ſouls, will then become conſpicuous, as our bodily parts are now; and diſcloſe themſelves in the very make and conſtitution of our whole frame. Sin will then appear to be as real a deformity, as an unnatural ſhape or a diſtorted member in the preſent condition of the body; only with this difference, that the one is a defect only in nature, the other will be monſtrous in another world, and ſeem a foul and odious deflection from that eternal order of things, which God hath obſerved in the works of the whole creation. Then will it be diſcover'd, at what a

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diſtance the ſins of men, place them from the likeneſs of God, that fountain of all beauty and perfection; and how it imprints the ſimilitude of an infernal fiend. Thus the ſins of men will become viſible, by a natural neceſſary conſequence; and will be recorded as one ſpeaks, *non in chartis corruptibilibus, ſed in immortali naturâ:* not by writing on paper, but in eternal nature. All the great variety of guilt, will then diſplay itſelf in the horrid foulneſs of the ſhape, inſomuch, that every feature of the miſcreant, will call aloud for vengeance on his own head. And how muſt he then give himſelf up to terror, when he ſees there is no room for mercy, without changing the nature of things, and overturning the whole order and œconomy of the univerſe.

4. There is another way of taking an exact account of the actions of men, and that is by the miniſtry of Angels. We know from many inſtances in ſcripture, that they are miniſtring ſpirits, and very much employ'd in the affairs of mankind. It hath been an opinion, not without ſhew of probability, that every perſon hath a good, and an evil angel, to attend him; whether this be ſo or no, to be ſure we are ſurrounded with angels, who, tho' they are inviſible to us, yet we are not ſo to them: we are acting upon the ſtage of this world, and they are the ſpectators; and 'tis ſure they muſt be very nice and curious obſervers of our whole behaviour, by that joy there is

is in heaven, over one ſinner that repents. SERM. 'Tis certain the evil ſpirits watch us narrowly, XXVI. for the Devil is call'd, the accuſer of the brethren.

Now that this can be done without them, is no argument at all, that they are not concerned in it; becauſe the mighty power and knowledge of God is able to perform every thing without them; and therefore for the ſame reaſon, there would be no occaſion for their miniſtry in any thing elſe. Now how, or after what manner they regiſter thoſe ſins of men, is utterly unknown to us; without doubt it is by ſome way that exceeds all human certainty.

II. This brings me to the ſecond thing I was to ſpeak to, namely, who are the *dead, ſmall and great*, who are here ſaid to *ſtand before God.* By this is meant perſons of all ages and conditions, the whole race of mankind, from the begining of the world to the laſt great day. Agreeable to what the apoſtle ſays, 2 Cor. 5, 10. *for we muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Both Jews and Heathen, had ſome knowledge of the ſouls of men being tryed and condemned after their departure: but they had no notion of one general judgment of the whole race of mankind at once, both for ſoul and body. This is a revelation peculiar to the Goſpel, which doth not only tell us that God

SERM. XXVI. *hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs*, but is ſo particular in deſcribing the manner and circumſtances of it, with the very words of the ſentence which will be pronounced, that nothing ſeems to be conceal'd from us, but that of the time when it will be.

Now it is neceſſary that there ſhould be one general day of judgment, and that all mankind ſhould come upon their tryal at once.

1. For the juſtification of God, and clearing of his mercy and his juſtice, that he might appear to be *juſt and true in all his dealings by the children of men.* How many ways have men of charging God fooliſhly? As if permitting Adam and Eve to fall, were not conſiſtent with his Goodneſs. As if the curſe for his diſobedience were wrongfully extended to his poſterity. As if the laws of the Goſpel were unnatural reſtraints, upon ſuch appetites and paſſions as are eſſential to us. And laſtly, as if the eternal puniſhment of the ſins of men, were not conſiſtent with infinite mercy. Now for the clearing up of theſe and ſuch like difficulties, 'tis neceſſary that all mankind ſhould appear at once, that in their preſence, he might convince all that *are ungodly among them*, of all *their ungodly deeds*, and of all *their hard ſpeeches, which ungodly ſinners have ſpoken againſt him*; that they may ſee and allow, that God did all that was conſiſtent with the purity of his attributes, for the ſalvation of men's ſouls,

ſouls, and could not have done more without injury to his nature. That it might be manifeſt, how he is *clear from the blood of all men*; and how the everlaſting damnation of the wicked, is wholly chargeable upon themſelves. SERM. XXVI.

2. Another reaſon why mankind muſt appear all at once in the laſt day is, becauſe the ſins of men will never come to their full ſize, and receive all their aggravation till the whole race of men are extinct. The conſequences of ſome men's ſins, run thro' many generations, and by a notorious bad example, and corrupt writings, may receive new aggravations to the end of the world; and therefore 'tis reaſonable, this general judgment of wicked men, ſhould not be until the meaſure of their iniquities is filled up.

3. The laſt reaſon I ſhall aſſign of this is, for the perfect completion of all the threats and promiſes of God. We are now told, that the righteous ſhall be *rais'd in glory*, and that when Chriſt appears, they ſhall appear with him, as he is. And on the contrary, that the wicked ſhall be *turned into hell*, and doom'd to *everlaſting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels*; wherefore 'tis neceſſary there ſhould be a general meeting of all the race of mankind, that the wicked might actually behold, the glory of the righteous; and the righteous, the miſerable condemnation of the wicked: that, as Job ſpeaks, all men might ſee with their *own eyes, and not another's*, how not one

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jot or tittle will faill of the word of God, 'till it be fully accompliſhed in the preſence of the whole world.

And now when all the whole race of Adam, is thus called together into one company, by a general ſummons of the laſt trump; what an amazing ſpectacle will it be! The very thought of it bears hard upon the mind, and fills it with horror. I know not how to go about to give you a notion large enough, to bear any proportion to it. Conſider the *ſixſcore thouſand ſouls*, at once in Nineveh, who *knew not their right hand from their left.* And that the poſterity of Abraham only, were ſaid to be as *the ſand of the ſea*; then where ſhall we find a compariſon for that aſtoniſhing multitude, which St. John ſays, Rev. 9. that he beheld, *which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues ſtanding before the throne.* And yet theſe are only the good he ſpeaks of here, which are ſaid to be the leſſer part. Then what muſt that whole number be, mention'd in Daniel, vii. 10. where he ſays that when *the judgment was ſet*, and *the books were open'd*; *thouſand tho ſands, miniſtred unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand, ſtood before him.*

Now if to all theſe we add, thoſe myriads of holy angels, who are ſaid to come *in the clouds of heaven* with our Saviour. And likewiſe thoſe accurſed ſpirits who fell with Lucifer, and are ſaid to be *reſerved in everlaſting*

laſting chains, under darkneſs, unto the judg- SERM.
ment of the great day; this will be a number XXVI.
worthy the majeſty of that great tribunal.

Should any of us behold this multitude in a viſion as St. John did, without being ſupported with the ſame ſtrength of ſpirit which was neceſſary for him, it would ſtrike us with confuſion. I ſhall only mind you, that every one of us here preſent will bear a part in this laſt great ſcene; and either be acquitted, or condemned, as we now prepare ourſelves for that great account. And this leads me to the

III. And laſt thing I am to ſpeak to from the words; and that is, what thoſe works are which are written in the books. And they are,

1. All men's outward actions, all the frauds and oppreſſions of the poor and needy, that ever they were guilty of; all their deceits and unfair dealings; all the adulteries, murders, and fornications; all the wickedneſs they were prompted to commit by their luſt, or avarice, or pride and ambition; all the wrongs and injuries they have done to the perſons and fortunes of other people; every act of gluttony or drunkenneſs that ever they were guilty of.

2. All their evil words are wrote in theſe books, every Oath they ſwore through their whole lives; all the curſes and execrations; all the prophane jeſts and virulent ſcoffs they caſt upon religion and holy things; all lies and flatteries, diſſimulations and hypocritical ſpeeches; all their back-biting and defamation of other people,

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people, and malicious reflections upon the persons and actions of other men.

3. All their thoughts will be more perfectly described than it was possible for themselves to express them with a multitude of words; all the evil imaginations and wicked designs of their hearts, which were never reduced to practice; all the pride of their minds; their secret vanity and envyings; and all thoughts of lust, or malice, or treachery, or revenge, which either want of opportunity, or regard only to their temporal pursuits, hindered them from accomplishing.

4. And lastly their sins of omission will make up no small part of that account which is taken of the wicked: all opportunities of doing good they ever slipt, are noted down; every sacrament they turn their backs upon; all their neglects of his publick and private worship; with their undevout and careless, their indecent, light, or wanton behaviour in the house of God; all neglect of necessary instruction of children and servants, and those who have a dependance upon them; all the acts of charity and beneficence that ever were in their power, but omitted by them.

Nor shall all these be recorded barely as they appear to us, but with a thousand aggravating circumstances, which men never dream of now; they shall be recorded with all their black train of attendants, and numerous evil consequences, which we are not able to comprehend; for men's sins have a malignant influence

fluence farther than we can reach with our limited ſtock of knowledge. SERM. XXVI.

Nor ſhall there any one good work that ever a wicked man did be remembered to him; they ſhall be all as if they never were; they ſhall be all blotted, together with his name, out of the book of the living: and when they begin to mention ſome of their good works, and plead for mercy upon that ſcore, *Lord have we not eaten and drank in thy name*, &c. He will own nothing at all either of them or their works, and will openly declare he knew them not.

Now as to ſuch as are perſwaded this day will ſurely come, and that they themſelves muſt in a ſhort time be conſigned over to it by death: the next thought that naturally ariſes in the mind is, what if it were to be now preſent? with what conſternation would this ſtrike the ſoul of an unrepenting ſinner, who is in no preparation to meet his judge? Let us ſuppoſe then that this were the very moment the apoſtle ſpeaks of, and that the *trumpet* ſhould *ſound*, and that the great and general change were even now to be performed *in the twinkling of an eye*. Good God! how ſhould we ſee the little diſtinctions of this life vaniſh, and all worldly grandeur and precedency at once deſtroyed and confounded? How ſhould we ſee the whole order and ſubordination of all ranks and degrees of men among us quite inverted; ſo that perhaps the firſt ſhould be laſt, and the laſt might be firſt? And how different would men

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men appear from that ſhew they make in the eye of the world, when the ſecret virtue and uprightneſs, and piety and devotion of ſome men's ſouls, become viſible in the very frame and make of the whole man, and diſpoſe them for being transformed into the bright and glorious image of the Son of God? How would the ſecret luſt and vanity, pride and covetouſneſs, malice and envy; with all the other unreſtrained and unconquered paſſions of a wicked perſon, combine together to make up a hideous and terrible compoſition, the moſt frightful ſpectacle in the univerſe? A horrible ſhape and form that muſt be, that leaves them in no condition of mercy from God, or pity from man or angel, and diſpoſes them for almighty vengeance and fury, and to be loathſome and deteſtable in the view of all intelligent beings; but to none more odious, than they will be in their own eyes.

Now thus transformed into a creature inconceivably deformed, ſtartled and confounded at his own image, let every perſon who is conſcious to his own heart of living in wilful and habitual ſin, imagine himſelf to be, and that he were to be, this inſtant dragged by the infernal fiends, to make his dreadful approach to the tribunal of an incenſed and angry judge: conſider but the conſternation of a criminal, when he comes before our courts of judicature to be tryed for his life; then who can conceive the anguiſh of him who is to come upon his tryal for ſoul and body; not with any proſpect

proſpect of being acquitted, but ſelf-condemned, with a glaring proof and evidence of his ſin in every ſhape and feature; and with a ghaſtly mixture of all variety of guilt and horror in his countenance. SERM. XXVI.

It cannot enter into our hearts to conceive what a ſurprize it will be to him, who endeavoured nothing more than to forget his ſins in this life, to find an exact and impartial tranſcript of the whole courſe of his life in thoſe books which ſhall be opened: When he ſhall have all the ſins that ever he committed in one view, together with all their aggravations; when, as 'tis ſaid in Pſalm 50, 21, *God ſhall ſet his ſins in order before his eyes.* What muſt it be to have all this load of guilt preſt upon him at once, without any thing to ſupport him; he will not be able to bear the weight; tho' he will have ſtrength for ever to labour under it. How muſt he ſtand aſtoniſhed at this tribunal, where all the hidden counſels of his heart are manifeſt; all his thoughts and works of darkneſs placed in open view, which he made it his ſtudy to conceal; and thoſe things expoſed to the ſight of all men, which he would now rather die than have diſcovered? How muſt he be filled with inſupportable ſhame and confuſion, when he finds there is no corrupting or gainſaying theſe records; and that no artificial colours, falſe deluſions, or ſubtile evaſions, will ſtand him in any ſtead?

And to make the ſcene yet preſent, let ſuch a perſon imagine he were immediately to hear that

SERM. XXVI. that final ſentence pronounced upon him, *Depart, thou curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* O eternity of miſery! doom'd to everlaſting burnings! how muſt the mention of it ſcare and terrify the guilty conſcience? that when infinite ages are expired, his torments are not nearer to an end than when he was firſt plunged into the fiery lake. Let him carry his mind on to the cloſe of this great and terrible ſolemnity, and imagine that the ſentence is no ſooner pronounced, but that the good and bad are actually ſeparating from each other, never, never to ſee one another more. When he looks up and beholds the glorious company with *the Lord in the air*, and takes his laſt parting view, as they are going in to *poſſeſs the kingdom*; how muſt this thought gnaw and ſting his ſoul, that it was once in his power to have been of that bleſſed number, but he ſlipt the happy opportunity, and can never have another tryal to all eternity.

No diſtorted viſage in the midſt of racks and tortures, can give us any notion of it; nor can any imagination paint out to us the wild diſtraction of their ſouls. No! they will then have ways of expreſſing their anguiſh and remorſe, which is but feintly ſignified to us now by *weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.* Alas! ſhrieks and groans are but ways men now have of complaining, and giving their fears or ſorrows vent; but thoſe will be wholly uſeleſs then, when there is none to pity; and nothing

nothing is left them for their portion, but black despair for ever. SERM. XXVI.

I wish I could leave these terrors of the Lord on the mind of every one that hears me; that they may dwell there, ready to start up at the approach of every temptation; to break the force of it; and render all the sinful pleasures of this life little and contemptible. I beseech God, that what hath been said may have that effect upon you; that this and such like warnings beforehand, might not add to your condemnation in that great day of accounts; but that when Christ shall come to judgment, every one of our names may be found *written in the book of life of the Lamb.*

SERMON

SERMON XXVII.

The law proved to be good from the evidence of our own conſciences.

ROM. vii. 19.

For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that do I.

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THERE is little doubt but that this is one of thoſe paſſages in St. Paul's epiſtles, which St. Peter obſerves are *hard to be underſtood*, and which they that are *unlearned and unſtable, wreſt as they do other ſcriptures, unto their own deſtruction.*

The uſual cauſe of moſt erroneous interpretations of ſcripture is, that people ſingle out particular texts, and then put their own conſtruction upon them, without any regard to what goes before or after; and without conſidering the context, and the whole drift of the diſcourſe: Whereas it is plain, that thoſe very perſons who deal thus by the book of God,

God, would cenſure any one, who would do the ſame by any other book whatſoever. SERM. XXVII.

There is nothing more common than this in the world, and it might eaſily be ſhewn, how this is the occaſion of moſt errors, that are held in oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed doctrine of the Church.

When we all come to have our differences decided in the laſt day, by him who revealed the Goſpel to us, 'tis to be feared that this very thing, will hinder multitudes from pleading invincible ignorance for their errors, viz. becauſe that they did not uſe the ſame ingenuity and common ſenſe in underſtanding the Scripture, which they never failed to uſe in any human author.

This is one of thoſe texts which hath been thus ſingled out, and to worſe purpoſes than that other of our Saviour's, *This is my body*; for that opinion of tranſubſtantiation, is big with errors in opinion only, and is the immediate occaſion but of one error in practice, that of *Idolatry*. But the falſe acceptation of this text, hath an univerſal malignant influence upon the *practice* of men, in which conſiſts the very life and ſoul of religion.

For the notion that multitudes, and particularly the *Presbyterians*, and all our Sectaries have of the ſenſe of theſe words, is this, viz. that tho' they do indeed *omit* ſome neceſſary duties, and are guilty of ſome *wilful* and *habitual* ſins; yet it is much againſt the inclination of their ſouls, their heart is right

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with God; so that they serve him in the *inner man*, and make no question, but that he will accept of those good *wishes* and *desires* of theirs.

Many indeed, will not express thus much, but they carry this in their minds, to quiet their consciences, whenever they find them uneasy at the sins they live in.

And others will not stick openly to justify their *gross*, *wilful*, *habitual* sins by it; and call them the unavoidable weaknesses and infirmities of their nature; and all the while assume such an air of piety and holiness in their countenances, and make such confident pretences to sincere religion, that they appear the most sanctified people in the world: And indeed, their great unhappiness is, that they think themselves so, for this makes it a dangerous sort of hypocrisy.

It is a case very common in the world, and therefore it must be worth while to consider the true sense of this part of scripture, on which they build that false and mistaken opinion of themselves.

That which makes this Chapter seem thus obscure is, St. Paul's supposing, the objections which he answers, already known; as indeed they were among those he wrote to, and therefore he only glances at them, and doth not express them in full, so as to state them formally and at large.

Wherefore the only way to know his meaning is, to observe the drift and chain of his

his whole discourse. His main design in this and the foregoing chapter, is to convince both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that they lay under no *obligation* to observe the *law* of Moses. SERM. XXVII.

As for the Jews, they were so wedded to their law, that at the first preaching of the Gospel, it was not safe for the Apostles to insist upon this great point of doctrine to them. For if they had fallen directly and immediately upon it, this would have stuck as an invincible prejudice with those who were otherwise well enough inclin'd to embrace the Gospel; so that this matter was to be opened by degrees: our blessed Saviour began it first in his discourse to the woman of Samaria; and as he himself observed the whole law, so the disciples complied for some time after his ascention. And at last St. Paul, who was himself a zealous and obstinate Jew, was by the wisdom of God made choice of to declare the *abrogation* and *nullity* of what himself was but lately so active and violent for. And accordingly he began it among the Gentiles, as we read in the 21st of the Acts, who were much easier to be convinced than the Jews. And here in this chap. he speaks of the matter fully, to the Jews that were at Rome, and tells them in plain terms, that they are wholly freed from the observance of the ceremonial law, that they are *dead* to the law, and delivered from it. And urges and explains the matter by the similitude of a married woman. While her husband is alive she is bound to

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him by the law; but when he is dead, ſhe is free to marry another: ſo when the old law was in force, men were obliged to obey it, but now it being *done away* (as he ſpeaks) and *dead* in the perſon of Chriſt, who was crucified for that purpoſe, they were free to embrace the Goſpel of Chriſt, which is a much better diſpenſation, becauſe it requires the purity of our *hearts*, and inward holineſs of ſoul, inſtead of thoſe outward ordinances. Upon this there occurs an objection, If ſo, then the law was the cauſe of ſin, viz. becauſe it commanded only an outward obedience, and did not exact that inward ſpiritual purity.

To this he anſwers, that the law was not the cauſe of ſin, for it did require *inward* as well as *outward* obedience, as is evident from that precept, *thou ſhalt not covet*. But the truth of it is, tho' the law required this inward obedience of the mind, yet it had no penalty annexed to the breach of that part of the law, as the Goſpel hath, viz. that of eternal damnation.

And therefore men took occaſion from this to indulge themſelves in all their luſts, as far as they could without temporal puniſhment: and thus the law which was in itſelf *good*, and *ordained to life*, was found to be unto *death*.

Here another objection is raiſed at the 13th verſe, where he comes more immediately to the matter we are now upon. The objection is this, However good as the law is, yet it became death to us; and the fault of men's miſ-

carrying,

carrying, will lye upon the law, and not upon themſelves. No! he anſwers, that men's ruin will lye upon their own heads for all that; for the law forbidding thoſe impurities of our *hearts*, doth not make any alteration in the nature of them; they do not become evil only, becauſe forbidden by the law, they are bad in themſelves, and the law only declares them to be ſo; it makes us ſenſible of their guilt, and makes them appear to be exceeding vile and ſinful as they are: So that it is plain our ſin and ruin is no way chargeable upon the law. SERM. XXVII.

But it is we, who are naturally very corrupt, and it is this corruption of our hearts, which inceſſantly inclines us to act contrary to it's dictates; that is the true and only cauſe of our ruin, and not the *law*, which ſo fairly warns us againſt it. He goes on, and ſays, that which puts this beyond all doubt, is the inward ſenſe of our own ſouls, and the regret we have, when we are guilty of any of thoſe things which are thus forbidden by it. And to urge the matter more home to them, he appeals to the conſciences of men, whether they did not check and rebuke them at the very inſtant they ſinned.

For the good that I would, I do not: and the evil that I would not, that do I; which is as much as to ſay, you, or I, or any other perſon, when we omit the doing of any good action we have opportunity for, we find our minds uneaſy at it; we are well enough in-

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clined to do it, and would ſurely perform it, if the vitious bent of our natural inclinations did not divert us from it, and draw us another way. And ſo likewiſe, when we are about to commit a ſin, it is plain we have ſomething within us, that checks and deters us from it; and the voice of conſcience is ſo plainly heard, that we would not commit the ſin, if there were not a temptation, and our corrupt hearts too well diſpoſed to yield to it. However, by our own experience we find it is always with regret and remorſe of conſcience we comply; and from hence he infers his concluſion very naturally, that we muſt own the *law* to be good, and no way the cauſe of their death: but that it is chargeable upon the baſe and ſinful compliance with the corruptneſs of their own hearts.

This, in ſhort, is the ſubſtance of what he enlarges upon in this diſcourſe; and this methinks, ſhould be enough to ſhew that St. Paul means nothing leſs than the giving people encouragement to commit ſin by his own example: A thing which at firſt hearing, appears ſo abſurd, that people ought to ſuſpect it ſo far at leaſt, as to weigh well whether he means any ſuch thing or no; eſpecially ſince if they are in the wrong, it is a miſtake that may prove fatal to their ſouls. And therefore, for the ſake of ſuch as are inclin'd to this erroneous interpretation, I ſhall be a little more particular; and ſhew, that St. Paul cannot mean what he ſays here, in his own perſon,

perſon, or in the perſon of any good chriſtian. And, SERM. XXVII.

1ſt, That he cannot mean what he ſays here in his own perſon, is evident from that character he gives of himſelf in other places of his epiſtles. He tells us of himſelf in another place. Rom. viii. 2. That *the ſpirit of life, had made him free from the law of ſin.* And again,

That *the world was crucified to him, and he to the world.* And in another place,

That *he kept under his body, and brought it into ſubjection.* And,

That he had *fought a good fight, and finiſhed his courſe.*

Now let us compare thoſe places with what he ſays here.

Here he ſays, that *ſin revived, and he died*; that is ſpiritually, and one ſpiritually dead is in a ſtate of eternal death and damnation, if he goes out of the world in that condition of ſoul.

That it had *ſlain him*; that is, deſtroyed his ſoul; utterly defaced and aboliſhed all ſenſe of God and goodneſs, and rendered him lyable to the juſt puniſhment and vengeance of God.

That he was *captivated* and *ſold under ſin*; a perfect ſlave to all his luſts and paſſions.

That *ſin wrought in him all manner of luſt and concupiſcence*; ſo that he gave a looſe to all his luſts and appetites.

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Now these things are so inconsistent, that it is utterly impossible they should be both meant of the *same* man. The things are in their own nature contradictory to each other; so that they who affirm St. Paul speaks in his own person here, must at the same time say that he plays the hypocrite in all those other places, where he gives a quite different account of himself.

2 And then 2dly, that he doth not mean what he says here in the person of a good christian, and a regenerate man, is plain; because what is said here is directly contrary to the whole tenor of christianity; which lays down quite different conditions of salvation, and gives quite another description of such as are sincerely good and regenerate. And particularly,

That they are *made free from the law of sin and death.* They are described to be such as *do not commit sin*; and that their *bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost.* And James ii. 10. *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point* (that is wilfully and habitually) *he is guilty of all.*

And in this very discourse whereof my text is a part, he describes good people after a quite different manner. In the 18, 19, 22, 23. where he says they are such as are *become servants of righteousness*; such as *yield their members to be servants of righteousness, unto holiness*; That *they have their fruit unto holiness.*

Now

Now all this, and more to this purpoſe, being ſaid in this ſame diſcourſe, one would think it were enough to prevent effectually any ſuch odd interpretation of theſe words. For it is plain, that they who ſay this place is ſpoke in the perſon of a regenerate man, do make the ſpirit of God ſpeak things contradictory, even in the ſame diſcourſe. SERM. XXVII.

And thus I think it appears very plain and clear, that the Apoſtle can have no ſuch meaning as they faſten upon him.

But to all this they anſwer, that he muſt mean *himſelf*, becauſe he uſes the firſt perſon all the way. But it is a thing very uſual, not only with St. Paul (as it were eaſy to inſtance) but even in common converſation to uſe the firſt perſon when they ſpeak of another. Suppoſe I ſhould go about to diſwade any perſon from the ſin of *drunkenneſs*, and ſhould addreſs my ſelf to him after this manner; and tell him, that drunkenneſs is a ſin againſt which we all know there is a poſitive command; by this ſin I render myſelf odious to God, by defacing his image; I expoſe myſelf to be laught at by men; I diſorder my reaſon; I miſpend my time; I ruin my health and reputation; and by it, I become obnoxious to eternal damnation. And if I ſhould add to this, that the very reluctance and remorſe of conſcience with which I commit that ſin, is a plain and convincing argument of the excellency of the Goſpel, which ſtrictly forbids all drunkenneſs. It is ſo much againſt the light of nature, that in being

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being drunk I act against my judgment, nay, and against my inclination too, so that it is evident, *that the evil which I would not, that do I*, by yielding to temptation, contrary to the sentiments of my own mind.

Again, suppose I should endeavour to make a man sensible of the sinfulness of his want of charity to the poor, after this manner: Surely nothing can hinder me from relieving the sick and needy, but my own covetous temper and immoderate love of money; and were it not for this, I should perform that necessary duty willingly; nay, and find great pleasure and satisfaction of mind in the discharge of it: So that in this sin of omission it is plain, *that the good that I would, I do not.* This plainly demonstrates the excellency of the evangelical law, which requires charity and giving of alms; and though the Gospel becomes death to men by this means, yet it is through our own wilful neglect and disobedience to its most holy and righteous precepts.

Now it would be very odd to infer, that therefore such a one were guilty of drunkenness, because he dissuaded another from it, by describing the guilt and danger of it in his own person.

Yet odd as it is, the case is the very same here: if St. Paul goes about to shew the law not to be the occasion of sin, by the conviction of men's own consciences who act against it, and doth this in his own person, it is very absurd to infer, that therefore he himself was the

the guilty man he deſcribes; and from hence immediately to catch at an opportunity of juſtifying our wilful habitual ſins, as if they were the unavoidable infirmities of our nature. SERM. XXVII.

But becauſe I would leave no room for doubt, let us change the argument, and apply what St. Paul ſays of the *Law* to the *Goſpel*, and thoſe under it; to chriſtianity, and thoſe profeſſors of it, who own the Goſpel, but do not think there is that indiſpenſible neceſſity for an univerſal and entire conqueſt over all their luſts and vitious inclinations; and do from this place infer, that the grace and mercy of the Goſpel will diſpenſe with thoſe ſins of theirs, which they commit unwillingly, and with regret and reluctance.

And the rather, becauſe this is the very thing which St. Paul deſigns to confute, and the very miſtake which firſt gave occaſion to this whole diſcourſe; as we ſhall find, if we look at the 15th verſe of the foregoing chapter.

When he had ſaid that they were freed from the law, *what then*, ſays he, *ſhall we ſin becauſe we are not under the law, but under grace?* Becauſe there is more abundant mercy and room for repentance under the Goſpel, ſhall we therefore think that we may commit ſin, even wilful deliberate ſins, becauſe the grace of the Goſpel will diſpenſe with them? *no, God forbid.* And from hence to the end of this chapter he ſhews, on the contrary, the indiſpenſible obligation that lay on them, effectually to conquer and

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and ſuppreſs all their luſts and vitious inclinations, and to perform an univerſal and entire obedience.

Therefore I ſay, inſtead of the *Law*, let us apply thoſe miſtaken verſes to the *Goſpel*, and to thoſe who think the goſpel may be thus far the occaſion of ſin, by permitting it thus, and diſpenſing with it: We will ſuppoſe them ſpoke in the perſon of a *Chriſtian*, inſtead of the perſon of a *Jew*, and then ſee how much they will make for their purpoſe; at the 7th verſe of this chap. *what ſhall we ſay then, is the Goſpel thus far the occaſion of ſin?* no, *God forbid.* At the 14th verſe, *for we know that the Goſpel is ſpiritual, but we are carnal.* The Goſpel plainly forbids thoſe ſins they indulge themſelves in, but their corrupt heart carries them on to act contrary to its precepts; and at the ſame time that they are guilty of thoſe ſins, their conſciences check them; they know them to be againſt the expreſs commands of the Goſpel; but they are won upon to comply againſt their judgment and their conſciences, with the importunity of their ſinful luſts and paſſions.

And herein they tacitly acknowledge the purity of the Goſpel, and conſequently the indiſpenſible obligation that lies on them to an entire obedience. For as it is in the words of the text, it is evident that they omit thoſe good things which they ought to do, as they are Chriſtians; and which they would do, did they not find the law of their members make

ſome

ſome oppoſition, and their vitious inclinations bias them another way. SERM. XXVII.

And it is as evident, that they commit thoſe things which the Goſpel tells them are ſins, and which they are never guilty of without uneaſineſs in their minds, and without a remorſe and regret of conſcience; ſins they would never be guilty of, if they were not inveigled to comply with thoſe vile inclinations, which the Goſpel tells them plainly it is their duty to ſuppreſs and conquer effectually, if ever they hope to be ſaved, and received to the mercy of God.

So that you ſee, inſtead of excuſing thoſe ſins of theirs by the gracious diſpenſation of the Goſpel, all that they can infer from this place is, that ſuch ſinners ſtand convicted by the judgment of their own conſciences; and that whoſoever ſays that the Goſpel will afford them pardon for any wilful ſin they continue in, are condemned by their own conſciences: Therefore, let no one flatter himſelf upon this ſcore; for the ſame conſcience of the ſin which thus accuſes them here, will undoubtedly do the ſame when they come to appear before the judgment ſeat of God.

And now all the difficulty concerning this matter, is reſolved into this one queſtion, *viz.* Whether, with the aſſiſtance of grace, they are able to avoid thoſe ſins, or whether they are not? *(i. e.)* whether they are truly ſins of infirmity, or no? for that the Goſpel forbids all thoſe ſins is undeniable; and that their conſciences

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sciences accuse them for them is plain; so that, if it be any way in their power to avoid them, then they will certainly be accountable for them; but if it be not in their power to avoid them, then indeed they will never be required at their hands: And in truth this is the thing they would fain perswade themselves. They are willing to believe that the temptations are so strong, that they are too weak to overcome them, and they yield to them tamely, in hopes that they are too weak, and please themselves with the serving God, as St. Paul says, with the *inward man*, with holy thoughts, and purposes, and desires, and with continual bewailing the frailty and weakness of the flesh.

But they would do well to consider, that no less than the effectual mortifying of all our sinful lusts and passions, is the necessary condition of salvation proposed to us in the Gospel. Our Saviour says, that it is they that *do the will of his heavenly father that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and in the chapter following my text, 13 verse, 'tis said, *if ye live after the flesh, ye shall dye; but if through the spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

And that this is not too hard for us is evident, for otherwise God would not require it from us: Though we are not able of ourselves, yet *through God that strengthens us, we are able to do all things* required from us; 1 Cor. x. 13, it is said, that *God will never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.*

So

So that it is the treachery and corruptness of our own hearts that makes those temptations seem invincible; if we were not wanting to ourselves, nothing, with God's assistance, would be too hard for us; for the same Gospel which threatens damnation to those sins, doth afford us grace sufficient to overcome them. SERM. XXVII.

If such as complain of the strength of temptations would but consider by what steps they fall into their sins; by what degrees the temptation insinuates and gains upon them; if they did but consider seriously as they ought, what are the best and most effectual means of conquering temptations, and carefully avoid the occasions and opportunities of sinning; and when they have thus done what lies in them sincerely and heartily, if they would put up their prayers to Almighty God continually for his assistance, they would soon find how little reason they have thus injuriously to charge their sins upon the want of sufficient strength, or upon the invincible corruption of their natures.

When a temptation is very strong, and that they are violently inclined to commit one of those sins they think they cannot avoid, if they did but imagine that they were instantly to be committed to the flames for it, this would take off the edge of the strongest temptation, and render it very weak and feeble. And why should not the thoughts of eternal fire be of as great force? for that is certain and unavoidable, and, for ought any one who commits a sin

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ſin knows, may be ſudden and immediate too.

And now it is time to wonder that, ſince the caſe is thus evident, any perſons ſhould deceive themſelves, by underſtanding a text quite contrary to the intent of it, and make uſe of it to juſtify an opinion, which (as we have ſeen) it was purpoſely deſigned to confute. The true reaſon of this is, a ſecret deſire men have to reconcile their hopes of heaven with the gratifying their preſent luſts; it is this that puts them upon wreſting ſcripture to ſuch miſtaken ſenſes: And if they would conſider themſelves impartially, they would find that which makes them catch at this miſtaken ſenſe, is to quell the clamours of their conſciences, merely for the preſent eaſe of their minds, and not to lay any ſolid foundation on this text for the ſalvation of their ſouls.

Some ſins are ſo profitable, or ſo agreeable to their conſtitutions, that they cannot find in their hearts to part with them; and yet they are not able to bear the thoughts of being damned for them; and therefore they ſilence the clamours of their conſciences with ſuch charms as theſe are. If they would look into themſelves they would find this at the bottom of this opinion; it is a pernicious and a dangerous error, and they may well ſay as it is in the cloſe of this chap. *O wretched men that they are, who ſhall deliver them from the body of this death?*

And now I have been thus long upon it, yet moſt of what hath been ſaid being of ſome difficulty,

ficulty; I ſhall for the ſake of ſuch as cannot go along with the chain of a diſcourſe, make the caſe yet plainer. And that I may do this, and bring what hath been ſaid, home to particular conſciences as I can, I muſt obſerve to you, that the reluctance men find in their minds to the committal of ſin, is no other than the oppoſition given to the fleſh by the ſpirit; the ſpirit of a man aſſiſted by the grace of God. Theſe two are in a ſtate of war, and our eternal ſalvation or damnation, depends upon an intire conqueſt and victory on one ſide or the other. I ſhall in few words repreſent the true ſtate of this Chriſtian warfare between the fleſh and the ſpirit, and then leave it to the conſcience of every particular perſon who hears me, to conſider which is his own caſe. SERM. XXVII.

Now there are four ſorts of people, in whom the ſtate of this war is very different.

1ſt. The firſt ſort are thoſe in whom the ſpirit or the mind is in perfect ſubjection to the fleſh. The mind is in the condition of a ſlave, quite conquered and utterly diſabled from making any reſiſtance; intirely at the command of every brutiſh luſt and paſſion. And this is the caſe of ſuch, who have been long and habitually vitious; who have worn off all ſerious ſenſe of religion, and have given themſelves up to commit any ſin that ſhall offer it ſelf; who have caſt off all ſerious thoughts of ſaving their ſouls; who not only neglect or deſpiſe all reveal'd religion, but have

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so defaced all the impressions of natural conscience, that they have worn off all uneasiness and remorse in sinning, and nothing gives them more disturbance, than the thoughts of such as live conformable to the laws of God; who are for that reason the sure object of their scorn and contempt, as well as the constant subject of their scoffs and raillery. These have no striving within them, no doubts or scruples; their consciences are dumb, and rarely give them any disturbance; so that they sin with very little regret and reluctance. St. Paul describes them as men whose *very minds and consciences are defiled*; the whole bent and inclination of their souls is all to the gratification of their appetites and passions; the want of any sense of religion at the heart, is visible thro' the whole course of their life and conversation.

Now this is not properly a state of war, because the fight or contest between the flesh and spirit is ended; the spiritual part is captivated to the law of sin; the mind truckles to it, and dare not so much as contradict the motions of a tyrant lust.

This is a desperate condition, because they are past all the ordinary methods by which God useth to save men's souls; and for that reason, they seem to be seal'd up to the dreadful day of vengeance upon all impenitent sinners.

All the comfort we can give to these is only, that they need not yet despair. For if they

they would, even yet, bravely put on a mighty, obſtinate reſolution, to break through all this reſtraint, tho' they have loſt that ſtrength of ſoul they once had, yet this may move God to renew it again to that degree, that they may in time overcome all their enemies, ſo that the mind ſhall have the maſtery at laſt. SERM. XXVII.

2d. But 2dly, another ſort there are, in whom the war between the fleſh and ſpirit is newly begun, which is the caſe of every one, when they firſt enter upon an holy life. The mind ſtruggles, and will not yield, tho' it fights to all diſadvantages. The fleſh at firſt hath yet the upper hand, becauſe of our natural tendency to all ſin; however, the mind is reſolved to fight it out, relying on thoſe aſſiſtances which God hath promiſed; and will not yield, tho' frequently foil'd by the violence of temptation.

This is a nice and critical juncture, and the dangerous point in the chriſtian life, becauſe the firſt onſet, is ever the moſt fierce and violent. Many, in their younger days eſpecially, put on firm reſolution of entering on a holy life, and they begin well, but not being able to bear the firſt ſhock of temptation, they are ſo quite beaten off the field, that they are entirely to begin a new. And the fatal conſequence is,

That multitudes are all at once ſo diſmayed and terrify'd, that they never rally again

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through their whole lives, but basely and cowardly yield themselves up to be for ever the slaves and servants of sin: they lay aside all thoughts of a virtuous and holy life, and habitually follow the bent of their natural passions and appetites. These have remorse of conscience for some time, but it wears off gradually, until at length they are easy and secure, so as not to have the least inclination to the greatest good, nor any reluctance to the greatest evil.

Others again there are, who are not so effectually overthrown and discouraged by the violence of temptation on their entrance on a holy life, and who resolve to take the field again, and meet the enemy, but yet still with the same success; thus they are ever resolving one time after another, and ever breaking their resolutions; they are always beginning, they live and dye resolving, but never make any progress in the conquests of their lust and passions, and in the attainment of true virtue and evangelical holiness. To this irresolute wavering state of people, who are ever new beginners, my text is particularly applicable. *The good that they would, they do not, and the evil they would not, that do they.* They have a willing mind, and are ever full of feeble resolutions, but because they do not keep the field of battle, they never have a prospect of victory over the world, the flesh and the Devil, and then they are apt to fall into the fatal delusion and hypocrisy, and

and ridiculous imagination that God will accept of their good wiſhes and deſires of holineſs, for that virtue and holineſs itſelf, which is their indiſpenſible duty to acquire, under all the difficulties and hardſhips of chriſtian warfare. SERM. XXVII.

3d. But 3dly, another ſort there are, in whom theſe enemies ſeem to ſtand upon equal terms, neither is conquer'd, and neither hath the victory; ſometimes the fleſh gets the better, and the mind is overborne with the number and inceſſant importunity of temptations. At other times the ſpirit baffles the ſtrongeſt of them.

Now this is the heat of the battle, and the weighty juncture that muſt decide the victory on one ſide or the other. Theſe have many anxious thoughts and deſponding ſcruples; but they may be all reduced to this one, viz. whether they perſevere or no; for they have not the victory which will crown them yet. It is yet but a partial obedience; they are indeed near the kingdom of God, but they muſt thoroughly ſubdue their enemies before they have a juſt title to it. It is a thorough conqueſt that is the neceſſary condition of ſalvation; therefore let none think themſelves ſafe, while they come ſhort of intire and univerſal obedience; for the living in one habitual wilful ſin, will blaſt all their hopes.

The danger of thoſe who thus engage in earneſt, commonly lies in ſome one particular ſin, to which their reſpective natural temper

SERM. XXVII. and conſtitution, or their calling and condition of life, or their worldly intereſt leads them into; it is notorious that many, who appear in other reſpects to be good men, do yet indulge ſome one darling luſt or paſſion, which like Agag is ſpared and cheriſhed, tho' the reſt of their ſpiritual enemies are deſtroyed. The ſureſt and the ſhorteſt way to a compleat victory, is to ſingle out that one giant-ſin, for a ſingle combat, and when that is vanquiſhed, all the reſt of their enemies will be overcome with eaſe; and this theſe combatants may be aſſured of, that their hopes and their fears of eternal ſalvation, are better or worſe founded, in proportion to their obſtinate perſeverance, and the degrees of that victory they obtain over their ſpiritual enemies, juſt as the ſtrength of all temptations proves weaker, and all virtue and goodneſs becomes more eaſy and practicable, and pleaſant to them.

Let us not fancy thoſe giant-ſins of ours, to be unconquerable, but ſtrive all we can, and pray heartily for grace. Let us but beſet them, and God will fight our battle. But if we ſay as the Jews did, *the people of the land are mighty*, and only wiſh we were fit for the poſſeſſion of heaven, we ſhall never enter into it.

4th. A 4th and laſt ſort, are ſuch as by a continual hearty endeavour, aſſiſted by the grace of God, have brought the fleſh intirely in ſubjection to the ſpirit; ſo that it truckles

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as much to the mind, as the mind did to it before the engagement. Nor can this ſo properly be called a ſtate of war; for the ſpirit hath compleated the victory, (i. e.) when we have arrived to a ſettled habit of virtue and piety. Then are we truly ſaints, and not till then. Then we are truly regenerate and in a ſtate of ſalvation. SERM. XXVII.

When we have ſo mortify'd the luſts of the body, and conquer'd the ſinful paſſions of the mind, that we commit no ſin wilfully or deliberately, or habitually; and when all the ſin we are guilty of is in ſmaller inſtances, and that too by ſurprize and inadvertency. When in all material inſtances, the good that we would we do and perform, and the evil which we would not, we conſtantly forbear, and avoid. When we preſs on towards perfection, and have no cauſe to lament and bewail any other than the unavoidable infirmities of human nature, I mean ſuch as are truly ſuch in the ſight of God.

Let us therefore not flatter ourſelves with any thing ſhort of this, for this is the truth of God, and nothing leſs will do.

When we are become univerſally and habitually holy, in all our actions as well as thoughts, and deſires, and inclinations, then we may with an humble aſſurance ſay, we *have fought a good fight*, and that *henceforth there is lay'd up for us a crown of glory, which God the righteous judge, ſhall give us at that day.*

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It is true, while we are in the fleſh, the remains of captivated ſins will murmur, and upon all occaſions ſtrive to break out into violence; but this will do us no harm, if we prevent their actually doing ſo; if we ſuppreſs them in their beginnings, and not let them grow upon us, and gain ground again.

This itſelf, is a buſineſs of great care and circumſpection even in the beſt of men; however, it need be no matter of ſcruple and deſpondency, for if they perſevere they need not doubt their reward; they may rely intirely upon the promiſes of God to have their victory crowned with a glorious immortality: And from that peace of conſcience which they may even here enjoy, they will be tranſlated to that place where they ſhall for ever reign in the full and juſt perfection of the ſons of God.

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The comfort of a good man at the approach of death.

2 TIM. iv. 8.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, ſhall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all thoſe alſo that love his appearing.

THE time when this epiſtle was writ, hath been diſputed, whether at St. Paul's firſt appearing before Nero, or at his ſecond, which was the time of his death: But the reaſons which are given why the epiſtle was wrote immediately before his martyrdom, ſeem much to out-weigh thoſe of the contrary ſide; and the poſtſcript is very expreſs that it it was written from Rome when Paul was brought before him the ſecond time, which, if it be allowed authentick, puts the matter out of doubt: And indeed it is not likely that the Apoſtle would

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would have used such solemn expressions of his courage and behaviour in any one particular danger, as is supposed by those of the other opinion. It is much more probable, that these words were a result of a serious view of the manner of his discharging the great trust committed to him, and that at a time when he had an immediate prospect of death, and was like to have no farther opportunity of confirming the truth of the Gospel, but by his blood. He was now apprehended by the Emperor, as is thought, under pretence of firing the city; and was sentenced to death for that crime, which he himself was guilty of: For when he had fired the city in sport, to take off the odium, he laid it on the christians. And that which is said to have incensed him more against the Apostle, was his converting one of Nero's concubines, from lewdness and heathenism, to the modesty and chastity of the Gospel. His end being near, as he says in the verses before the text, when he was ready to be offered, and the time of his departure being at hand, all his labours and services administer solid joy and comfort to him; his hopes clear up at the approach of the death; all his despondences begin then to vanish, and he hath such a full assurance of hope, that he already sees Heaven open to receive him, and the inward testimony of his conscience is so clear and sincere, that it breaks out into these expressions of a full trust and confidence in the veracity and goodness of God; *I have fought a good fight*; *I have*

I have finiſhed my courſe. Henceforth, &c. SERM. XXVIII.

In which words, we have theſe five things expreſsly contained, in this order.

The 1ſt thing is, That there is a reward of virtue and piety in another world, which is here expreſſed with a full confidence, and the greateſt aſſurance imaginable, which ſhews that the faith and perſwaſion of his mind, founded upon the promiſes of God, was as firm and unſhaken, as any aſſent could be from demonſtration or ſenſible evidence. When men's minds are purged of the prejudices of ſenſe, by the habits of virtue and piety, and are diſentangled from the ſenſual pleaſures of this world, and are uſed for ſome time to reflect upon themſelves and a future ſtate, then their minds clear up as to theſe matters; they begin to have quick and lively ſentiments of them; and then the evidence they have of moral truths, is nothing ſhort of what knowledge we acquire by the ſtricteſt methods of reaſoning: And that prophane and carnal men, perſons habitually wicked, whoſe eyes the God of this world hath blinded, are ſo much in the dark, as to theſe things of another life, is no wonder; for people that do not apply themſelves to ſearch into the nature of any particular ſcience, cannot expect to comprehend the force of any reaſoning of that nature: And ſo it is in religion; unleſs people will bend their minds this way, and put themſelves in the road of thinking, they will not diſcern the great ſtrength, and invincible force of that evidence

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vidence we have for the moral and myſtical truths of our religion, and particularly of this, of an eternal weight of glory, for good and virtuous people, in Heaven; of which St. Paul's words ſhew us he had ſuch a firm perſuaſion.

The diſpoſition of men's minds, when death is near them and unavoidable, is very different, according as their lives have been truly good and virtuous, or lewd and vitious: When good people are going out of the world, then they are filled with comfortable and joyful expectations of being for ever happy; and the wicked in thoſe circumſtances, are terrified with *a dreadful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation.* Theſe things are not fleeting and tranſient, but laſting and durable, and leave ſuch deep impreſſions upon the minds of men, that they can never bear them off. Though vitious men, in health and proſperity, baniſh all thoughts of another world, and feel but little remorſe of conſcience, yet when any danger threatens them, then they are alarmed with ſudden apprehenſions of vengeance; whereas, the greater the danger is, the more firm and poſitive is the teſtimony of a good conſcience; and the nearer death approaches, theſe hopes and fears become more ſtrong. And thus St. Paul, when he was in priſon, and was convinced that the time of his execution drew nigh, inſtead of being dejected, his hopes were enlarged at the approach of death. But 2dly,

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The second thing expressed in these words, is the nature of the reward of virtue and goodness in another world, and it is here called *a crown of righteousness.* That of a crown is the most usual representation of those heavenly joys that are to be the reward of virtue hereafter; and accordingly, it is called elsewhere *a crown of glory that fades not away.* And it is said, that *Christ hath made us kings and priests to God, and that we shall reign with him for ever*: By which expressions is undoubtedly signified some extraordinary dignity that shall be conferred upon us in heaven, but of what nature, we are able not now to conceive. It is called a crown of righteousness for these two reasons: SERM. XXVIII.

1st, Because the promises of eternal happiness are made only to good and virtuous persons; and therefore it is said, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* And,

2dly, Because of the natural tendency of virtue and holiness to make men glorious and happy in another world, insomuch that glory is literally begun in grace; and this is the reason of those scripture expressions of calling virtue and goodness by the name of light, and that *the righteous shall shine beyond the glory of the Sun*; and that piety and holiness go by the name of the white robe in the Revelations.

I shall only observe to you, that this crown of glory is said here to be *laid up* for us; because the true nature and degrees of this glory and happiness of the saints is so obscured from

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us now, that we have little or no notion of them, and therefore it is said, that *our life is hid with Christ in God*; because, as it is said in another place, *it doth not yet appear what shall be*; *but we know, that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him.* But then we must consider well, that this crown of glory is not laid up for us as an inheritance that will surely devolve upon us as heirs, by any unalterable settlement or decree, as we are the peculiar elect of God; but it is laid up as a reward or prize that is to be obtained by labour and industry, by resolution and courage, and by an habitual practice of a holy life: So that if ever we hope to obtain it, it must be by thus *pressing towards the mark for the prize of our high calling*; for if we do not make this calling and election sure to us while we are in this world, we shall come short of the glory of God in the next. But 3dly,

The third thing expreſt in this text, is the giver; *which God the righteous judge shall give us*; and that this is not added here without very good reason; for that must be exceeding great and valuable, which is worthy of God to bestow, who is the great Creator and Disposer of all things; and nothing is so apt to raise our thoughts, to enlarge our apprehensions, and give us worthy notions of those rewards of virtue in another world, as the consideration of the giver. If we do but consider, that he is a God of infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, what can be too great to hope for

for from him? As he is Omnipotent, what is it he cannot do for us? And since he made us out of nothing, to how great a degree can he improve our nature? And to what a vast extent can he enlarge all our faculties? Of how great things can he make us capable? And then how great things can he prepare, to fill them all with unspeakable delight and ravishment? And then, as he is of infinite wisdom, there is nothing so great, that he cannot contrive for us: He knows what will be most suitable to all our spiritual appetites and desires; and therefore, we shall not only be possessed of that which is good in itself, but of that which is exquisitely best: For what can lye hid from infinite wisdom and knowledge? SERM. XXVIII.

But above all, the consideration of his goodness strikes our minds with a yet more quick and lively sense of those heavenly joys; for this will engage him to bestow upon us all that his wisdom can contrive, or his almighty power can effect. For this crown of glory that he will place upon our heads, is not the payment of a debt, or the reward of our merit; if it were, we should justly have but very scanty notions of it: But it is the free gift of his grace; it is the bounty of God; and therefore, how great must that glory be, when he shall reward us, not according to our services, but according to his own immense, unlimited goodness. Nothing can be too great for him to confer upon us, though the least of his favours is too great for us to deserve. Nay, what

must

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muſt it be when he himſelf becomes our reward; he that is the ſource and fountain of glory and happineſs, who hath all perfections, and makes all things good and happy only by diſcoveries of himſelf to them. It muſt be ſomething unconceiveably great and worthy of him, when he ſets himſelf after a ſolemn manner to ſhew us what he can do for us at a time when he ſhall come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed in him; when he gives us a near view of himſelf, and unfolds all the excellencies of his nature to be adored, and praiſed, and magnified by all the choiceſt works of his creation.

Nay, what muſt it be when we come to be one with him, which is an expreſſion we durſt not utter, but that our Saviour ſpoke it firſt, and gives us warrant for it; this carries the mind on to ſomething ſo lofty and aſpiring, that we are apt to check our too forward thoughts, and fear the ſin of Lucifer. But oh! the depth of the goodneſs of God to us, beyond even what we read of to the Angels, for undoubtedly, this expreſſion of being one with him, ſignifies a myſtical union, the nature of which we are not able to conceive; however, thus much we may ſay of it, that it imports theſe three things.

1. That as the humanity of Chriſt is united to the Godhead, ſo there ſhall be a union of all glorified ſaints in Heaven, to the ſame eternal

ternal God, though we know not in what it will consist. SERM. XXVIII.

2. It denotes a likeness of nature, and a great resemblance we shall then have of the divine nature, and a participation of his excellencies and perfections.

3, And lastly, it must signify a sameness of enjoyments in kind, though not in degree, and then if we do but consider what is the nature of those enjoyment which make up the felicity of God, then when we come to partake of the same, how happy must it needs make us, this is the very top of what we are able now to think or speak of those heavenly joys, and therefore nothing more remains for us in this life, but silent wonder and admiration.

I shall only observe to you here, that God is said to be a righteous Judge in conferring these things upon us, not because they are any due reward of our merit, but because he hath bound himself by promise to give this crown of glory to all that seek for it by patience in well doing; so that it is become a debt in respect of God, and the obligation he hath laid upon himself, though it be none in respect of us; so that though we cannot earn it and deserve it, yet we have a sure and solid foundation for our hopes, the repeated promises of almighty God, who is a God of truth, and keeping his promise for ever, and this is the ground of St. Paul's confidence; his conscience approved of his services, and

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ſince he had done what God required, there remained nothing but the fulfilling of his word.

4. The 4th thing mentioned in this text, is the time when this crown ſhall be given, (i. e.) at the day of judgment, which is here called, as it is in many other places, that day, by way of excellence, as it is the great and terrible day of the Lord, and the day of the revelation of the power of God. And the reaſon why this crown is laid out of our ſight until that day, is,

1. Becauſe while we are in this world, is the time of tryal, and ſince it is a kingdom to be fought for, and a prize to be obtained, it is not to be conferred until we have conquered our ſpiritual enemies, and that our race is ended. And then

2. We can not hope to come to the conſummation of our happineſs until ſoul and body meet, to be rewarded together; not but that the ſoul, even in the ſtate of ſeparation, ſhall enjoy great degrees of bliſs, but that it is much ſhort of what will be conferred upon them at the day of judgment is plain, from that impatience of theirs for that day, expreſſed in the Revelations.

3. And then 3dly, this is deſigned to ſhew us that the rewards of virtue and goodneſs, are not to be expected in this life, as ſome perſons have dreamt of an earthly crown, and then reigning here on earth with Chriſt in a viſible appearance; no, it is a crown of righteouſneſs, which

which will not be conferred until that day, which is not temporary, but ſhall remain eternal in the heavens. SERM. XXVIII.

5. The 5th and laſt thing expreſſed is the character of the perſons to whom this reward will be given, and that is to St. Paul and to all who love the appearing of our Saviour. By his appearing, is more eſpecially meant that time when the ſon of man ſhall appear in the clouds of heaven, arrayed in the glory of his father, with the holy Angels, to reward every man according to his work; and they are ſaid to love his appearing, who by an unfeigned repentance, and a ſincere practice of a holy life, have juſt reaſon to hope for his coming at the day of judgment, thoſe who have quitted and foregone all the ſinful pleaſures and vanities of this life, and brought their mind ſo much off from the periſhing ſatisfactions of this world, that all their hopes and expectations are bent upon what ſhall then be conferred upon them; it is natural for all people to long for the time when they have any certain expectations of good, eſpecially what their hearts are ſet upon, and therefore if perſons by denying themſelves many of the pleaſures and ſatisfactions of this life for the preſervation of a good conſcience, have few or no worldly deſires left, if by frequent converſing with God, by prayer and meditation, by thinking often of divine things, and letting their mind run upon virtue and holineſs, upon God and the things of another

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world, have arrived to a good degree of sincere religion, so as to render all the appetites and affections of their souls divine and spiritual, they will of course be pleased with the thoughts of that day when all these desires of theirs shall be filled, and all they lived in expectation of brought to pass.

I am sensible the thought what I am now speaking occasions in the mind of every sincere Christian that hears me is this, if the loving his appearing, and longing for the day of judgment, be a necessary qualification for it, they have reason to suspect their condition, for they find in themselves a mighty fear of that day, and they are apt to be filled with terror at the thoughts of it. But there is a great difference between these fears of good Christians, and those boading thoughts of vengeance, which upon every appearance of danger or approach of death, rise up to terrify and fill the wicked with black and dismal thoughts; there is a great difference between despondency and despair: to despair, is to have no degree of hope left, but to despond, is only to have our hopes intermixt with fears and jealousies of our selves, and our own performances, which proceed from the weakness of our judgment, or from a melancholy constitution, or from the suggestions of the Devil; and the first occasion of them, is the great eagerness of our minds, and the earnest bent of our souls upon those heavenly enjoyments, so that we think we can never be sure enough of

of them. But that all these distractions do not so much destroy their hopes while they continue their endeavours, is plain; for no man would use the least endeavour in a thing he had no hopes at all of succeeding in. So that if these things quicken their endeavours, make them more watchful over themselves, and more exact in the discharge of their duty, it is so far from destroying their hopes, that it encreases that very grace which they think they tend to destroy. It is with religion, as with our endeavours in any worldly matter which we prosecute: if men have no hopes at all, they wholly desist: if their confidence be too great, this naturally makes them careless and negligent, and many a person hath lost heaven by this presumptuous assurance: if his hopes are mixt with fears, this quickens his endeavours, makes him more resolute and vigorous, and active, and thus his fears become the greatest means of gradually strengthening and enlarging his hopes. SERM. XXVIII.

But I must confess there seems to be something beyond this, designed in these words of *loving his appearing*, and that is, that Christians by constancy in virtue and holiness, should wear off these fears by degrees, and arrive to such a disposition of mind, that the thoughts of that day shall be comfortable to them; that it shall chear their minds, and that they shall live in a joyful expectation of it, and this is the reason of those expressions

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where we are bid to abound in hope, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

So that in truth it is matter of duty to acquire as good a degree of this joy in the holy Ghoſt as we can; and therefore we are bid daily to pray *thy kingdom come*, becauſe all ſincere Chriſtians are ſuppoſed to be in a condition of wiſhing for this appearance of the ſon of God. And the reaſon of this is, becauſe a ſtrong and lively hope is the greateſt encouragement to virtue and holineſs that poſſibly can be; he that hath this hope purifieth himſelf as God is pure, it is the natural effect of hope, to make us cleanſe and purify ourſelves, and this hope of ſalvation is by St. Paul, more than once called a helmet. The ſimilitude is very apt and ſignificant, for when our thoughts are thus taken up with the things of another world, when our fancy is full of it, and our imaginations deeply affected with them, temptation cannot tell how to aſſault us, nor where to enter.

I ſhall obſerve here, that this crown of glory is laid up not for him only, but for all that love the appearing of our Saviour, for all good Chriſtians who in the piety and ſincerity of their hearts, are diſpoſed for any ſuffering if God ſhould call them to it, for it is not prepared for Apoſtles, Martyrs, and Confeſſors only.

So that there is not one of us here preſent, but through the grace of God we have it in our power to arrive at this comfortable aſſurance, we

we have the ſame encouragements and the aſ- SERM. ſiſtance of the ſame ſpirit. So that we may XXVIII. triumph even on this ſide the grave, and glory over our ſpiritual enemies here in the midſt of their own kingdom. There wants nothing to effect this but an obſtinate invincible reſolution in time, before we have loſt all opportunity for virtue, and it is this will ſting the ſouls of wicked perſons, when they are near their death, that they did not provide this comfort for the evil day, when it was ſo eaſily in their power.

Having thus ſpoke to thoſe five things contained in the text, I ſhall only make two inferences which directly follow from this paſſage of Scripture.

1. And the 1ſt is, that the only good foundation for aſſurance of glory and immortal life, is that of good works and the practice of a virtuous and holy life; it is this we find was the ground of St. Paul's aſſurance, and that upon it he built all his hopes. In the verſe before the text, he ſays, that he hath fought a good fight, he hath finiſhed his courſe, he hath kept the faith, and therefore it is that he concludes ſo peremptorily, that henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of glory, which the Lord the righteous judge ſhall give him at that day.

It was not any confident perſwaſion of his particular election by which he came by this aſſurance, but by thoſe good works and vir-

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tuous practices of his, which he propoſes to our imitation in the 2 Cor. 6. by patience, by labours, by watchings and faſtings, by pureneſs, by enduring afflictions, giving no offence, and approving himſelf to God.

It was by keeping his body under and bringing it into ſubjection, and in ſhort, by exerciſing himſelf in all things, to have *a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man*, and this good man had ſo little dependance upon his being of the number of ſuch as were abſolutely elected, that in the latter part of that former verſe, the reaſon he gives why he was ſo vigorous in acquiring theſe virtues and graces, and in the diſcharge of his duty in all reſpects, is, leſt that while he preached to others, he himſelf might become a caſt-away; and in the words of my text, he declares, that this crown is not laid up for him only, or for any peculiar number of people, but for all perſons who live in obedience to the Goſpel as he did, and ſecure themſelves aright, in the promiſes of God by the habitual practice of a virtuous and holy life.

From whence we may ſee plainly what a ſandy foundation they build their hopes of ſalvation upon; who inſtead of acquiring aſſurance by this only one infallible method, make it a great part of their religion to be all their lives working themſelves up to a ſtrong imagination of their being of the number of God's elect people; and upon this confidence fancy, they can never fall finally, and there-

fore

fore live in the practice of some sins, thinking that either they are pure infirmities, or that they shall surely repent of them some time or other. SERM. XXVIII.

I appeal to the consciences of many that hear me, whether this hath not been their own case, and whether it is not plain, that such persons build their hopes upon the wind; this is what St. Paul calls running uncertainly, and *fighting as one that beats the air.* These fancies will all vanish at the approach of death, and leave them poor and naked, and comfortless; and though custom, and a warm imagination, may keep up something of this to the last, yet in that day it will appear to be *the hope of the hypocrite*; for *the hope which maketh not ashamed*, as St. Paul tells us, is that which is from experience; *i. e.* that which is built upon tryal of ourselves; what degrees of virtue and goodness we have attained to.

2. The other inference I shall make from hence is, that a full and absolute assurance of our salvation, is not to be had till the approach of death: This is a direct inference from these words of his, since in all the former part of his life we read nothing of this nature, at least so positive; but, on the contrary, we find expressions of his fearfulness and despondency, and particularly in Philip. 3. he speaks how he had not already attained, nor was already perfect; and therefore, forgetting those things he had already arrived to, he reached forth unto those he as yet wanted. But these

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of the text were ſpoke when he had finiſhed his courſe. That which gives us a full aſſurance of hope, is the holding out to the end; and though a man be ever ſo well diſpoſed at preſent, he cannot tell what he ſhall be hereafter: They who ſtand, are bid to take heed leſt they fall, becauſe they may do ſo; and we are told, that then is the time of boaſting and glorying; not when we put on our armour, but when we come to put it off; till the battle is near over, we cannot tell whether we have won the day; nor can we tell whether we have gained the prize, till the race is near ended.

When men come to dye, then indeed their eyes are opened, and they have a clearer proſpect of that eternity that is before them; and their minds are filled, either with terror or joy, as either the flames of Hell or the glories of Heaven come within their view: And then the moſt terrified fancy cannot paint out to itſelf the horror and conſternation of a wicked man, when he reflects upon his former ſins, when he hath ſlipt his time for repentance and good works; when all the comforts of this life have left him, and that he muſt expect none in the next; when he ſees there is no remedy, but he muſt go hence into the other world, then he may affirm the clear contrary to what St. Paul ſays: That henceforth there remains nothing to him, but a ſad expectation of a due reward of his unrighteouſneſs, *and a dreadful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation*, which God,

God, who is a righteous judge as well as merciful father, shall surely denounce against him, and not only against him, but against all such wicked impenitent wretches who, by reason of their sins, have cause rather to tremble at the thoughts of his appearing than to wish for it with impatience, and rejoice at the hopes and expectation of it. SERM. XXVIII.

But, on the contrary, when they find they have conquered all their sinful inclinations, and made it their business to acquire the virtues and graces of the gospel; when looking back on their former life, they find they have laid hold of the opportunity, and have not slipt the proper seasons for virtues; when they consider how they were meek and humble, and sober and temperate, and chaste in the greatest vigour of their youth; that they were just and upright in all their dealings in the busiest time of their age: When by recollection they find, that in the sorest tryals of affronts and injuries from others, of reproaches, and slander and calumny, they had borne it all with patience, and an humble resignation to the divine will, and without any returns of fury, or recrimination or revenge; that they did all acts of mercy and charity when opportunity offered, and while their substance was truly their own, before another had any right in it by the approach of their death; that they were diligent in their proper business, and faithful and active in the discharge of their calling while they were in full strength of body and vigour of mind; and, in short, when they consider that they took

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up in time, *remembered their Creator in the days of their youth*, and begun the practice of virtue and holineſs ſoon enough to make all virtues and graces of the Goſpel habitual, ſo as to grow up to this very temper and diſpoſition of their ſoul.

O! theſe are the things will give ſolid joy and comfort to a dying man; it is this will make his conſcience ſpeak peace to him, though it were in the midſt of racks and tortures; theſe are the things that will make him triumph over death and the grave, and fill his ſoul with ſo much ſweetneſs and complacence, with ſuch joys and tranſports, that no expreſſion can reach them; they have ſo much of Heaven in them, that it cannot enter into the thoughts of any, but thoſe bleſt departing ſouls who enjoy it; who with juſt confidence, and a full aſſurance of hope, may with St. Paul ſay, that *henceforth there is laid up for them a crown of glory, which God, the righteous Judge, ſhall give them in that day; and not to them only, but to all thoſe who love his appearing.*

SERMON

SERMON XXIX.

The neceſſity of crucifying our affections and luſts.

GAL. v. 24.

And they that are Chriſt's have crucified the Fleſh, with the affections and luſts.

THIS of crucifying the fleſh is a figurative expreſſion of a very large extent, and comprehenſive ſignification, and imports no leſs than the reſtraining and mortifying all the corrupt and vitious inclinations of our nature, rectifying and correcting all the exceſſes and irregularities of our appetites and paſſions, and the gaining ſuch a conqueſt over them, that they ſhall be brought intirely under the direction and conduct of reaſon and grace: The alluſion of the phraſe is to the body of Chriſt, which was nailed hands and feet to a croſs, fixed ſo, that it could neither ſtir nor move, nor go whither it would, (as Chriſt himſelf ſpeaks, alluding, as is conjectured, to the ſame death of crucifixion, which St. Peter underwent for-

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ty years after.) The body thus nailed and faſtened, hath loſt the uſe of all its members; it is paſt the exerciſe of any of its powers and faculties; it grows ſtill more faint and languid, till at laſt it expires, and has neither ſenſe nor motion left. And that which makes this manner of ſpeaking yet more apt and expreſſive is, the ſimilitude there is between the great trouble and uneaſineſs men find in croſſing and breaking the force and prevalence of their affections and luſts, and that pain and anguiſh endured by a body nailed to a croſs. It is in alluſion to this, that the ſtile of the New Teſtament runs ſo much upon our being dead to ſin, and living to holineſs. Rom. viii. 10. *If Chriſt be in you the body is dead, becauſe of ſin; but the ſpirit is life, becauſe of righteouſneſs*; conſonant to which, the whole complex of all the evil propenſions and tendencies of our corrupt nature is called the *body of ſin. Our old man*, ſays St. Paul, Rom. vi. 6, *is crucified with him, that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed.* In other places, it is called the *fleſh*, in which the ſame Apoſtle ſays *there dwelleth no good thing*, Rom. vii. 18. And in another place, Gal. v. 17, that *the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary the one to the other.*

Thus we ſee the great excellency of this manner of ſpeaking, which is plain and eaſy, yet very expreſſive and full of ſignification, inſomuch, that the oppoſition made between the fleſh and ſpirit, the crucifying the one, and the

the cherishing and encouraging of the other, together with the comparison so frequently made between the natural life and death of the body, and the good or ill condition of the mind, with respect to virtue or vice (the sure effect and consequence of which is, literally, either the everlasting life or death of body and soul); these obvious figures, I say, and easy comparisons, have given greater light into the knowledge, even of natural religion, than all the morality of the Heathen world; they enlarge our thoughts, and open to the mind a vast scene of the most useful and necessary knowledge, a distinct knowledge, void of all confusion; it takes away all blindness and uncertainty concerning our greatest interest; our duty is hereby fixed and determined, and the work of our life plainly cut out for us; so that there is no difficulty now left in the theory, but in the practice. SERM. XXIX.

We must not mind the things of the flesh, *to fulfil the lusts thereof:* We are to *mortify the deeds of the body*; so that our very *members* must be made *instruments of righteousness.* And in the words of the text, we must crucify *the flesh, with the affections and lusts*; we must cleanse ourselves *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and be *renewed in the spirit of our minds.* This is the work that lies before us; in this consists the true perfection of our nature; thus we are to be restored to a state of innocence, to the favour of God; and thus we are to avoid the misery, and attain to the happiness

SERM. XXIX. happineſs of another world; and thus we ſee that Chriſt crucified, which to the Greeks was *fooliſhneſs*, appears to be in truth the *power* of God to reſtore fallen man; *and the wiſdom of God in a myſtery, which God ordained before the world for our glory.*

In diſcourſing of theſe words, I ſhall obſerve this method:

I. I ſhall inſtance thoſe affections and luſts in particular, which are to be crucified.

II. I ſhall ſpeak of the moſt effectual means and method of performing this.

III. I ſhall obſerve two or three things as rules of prudence, for our better conduct herein.

IV. I ſhall apply the motives implied in the text, to prevail on us to the performance of this great work.

And 1ſt. As to the firſt then, St. Paul tells us, at the 19th verſe of this chapter, that the works of the fleſh, which are to be crucified, are manifeſt; *i. e.* they are well known by the light of reaſon; they are againſt natural religion, and the common ſentiments of the beſt informed part of mankind, which are theſe; μοιχεία *Adultery*, the wronging and defiling the marriage-bed, πορνεία *Fornication*, the defilements of perſons unmarried; either with one another, or with married perſons, ἀκαθαρσία *Uncleanneſs*, by which is ſignified all manner of luſtful actions that are inceſtuous or unnatural, and whatever is not referred to adultery and fornication, ἀσελγεια, *Laſciviouſneſs*, to which is to be referred all the unchaſtity of the mind, impure

impure thoughts; all obscenity in words and expressions; all wantonness in looks or gesture; all incitements to lust, and whatsoever disposes the body or mind for the committal of any grosser acts of this sin: So very particular hath the Apostle thought it necessary to be, in enumerating the several instances and degrees of this prevailing sin. And if the Apostle here affirms, that they who indulge themselves in any of these *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, what shall we think of such who have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness? SERM. XXIX.

The next is εἰδωλολατρία *Idolatry*. This was levelled by the Apostle at the Heathen practices in his days; but, if he were alive now, he would apply it to the practice of Christians in ours, who pay that worship, which is due to God alone, to wafers, images, and reliques, and to saints and angels, their fellow-creatures. φαρμακεία *Witchcraft*; which, besides the grosser act of compact with the devil, implies the consulting of fortune-tellers; using of any means of incantation by spells or charms, which is at this day in practice among the ignorant and superstitious; though it be in truth no other than going to the devil for solution of their doubts, and repair of their losses.

Ἔχθραι *Hatred*, manentia odia, says Grotius; settled inveterate hatred conceived against any one, or for any cause, which prompts us to wish for and catch at all advantages against him we hate, to vent our rancour and spleen

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againſt him on all occaſions. To this the Apoſtle afterwards oppoſes *love*, which diſpoſes men to friendlineſs and an amicable correſpondence with all men, even with their greateſt enemies, as far as may be with ſafety to themſelves.

Ἔριες *Variance.* By which is meant all words and expreſſions that are the reſult of anger and fury; all opprobrious language, railing and reviling; all contentious diſputes, perverſe reaſonings, and obſtinate debates which proceed from a ſpirit of contradiction, and a deſigned induſtrious oppoſition to the ſentiments of other men.

Ζῆλοι *Emulations.* Eager contentions about place and dignity; ſtrivings about ſuperiority, and reſtleſs purſuit of preferment; together with thoſe unjuſt and uncharitable criminations, malicious inſinuations to blacken competitors, and leſſen their character; grieving at their ſucceſs; together with all the other indirect practices, ſo notorious in all ſuch competitions; which proceed from a great opinion we have of our own merits and qualifications, and the contempt we have for others, perhaps more deſerving men than ourſelves.

Θυμοὶ *Wrath.* This is ſpoke of perſons who are apt to reſent, and take fire on all occaſions that offer, who are ſubject to ſudden and violent paſſions upon every ſurmiſe or colour of provocation given them; who are of a waſpiſh temper, of a peeviſh and fretful diſpoſition, made uneaſy to themſelves and others by every

every trifle; ever ruffled and discomposed by things of no moment or consideration; displeased with every person and every thing, that doth not hit their humour, and exactly suit their fancy. That which discovers the great impotence and prevarication of men of this temper is, that they always make the fairest shew of gayity and an agreeable conversation to strangers, and such as do not value their resentments; end turn their dark and gloomy side to their own family, and such as have a necessary dependance upon them; they vent all their good humour abroad, and wreck all their spleen at home, upon such as are under a necessity of bearing it; upon such whom, of all people, they are bound to love and cherish most, and who have the best title to their tenderest affections, by the laws of God and nature. SERM. XXIX

Ἐριθεία, *Strife.* This imports a mind troublesome and turbulent; bent upon promoting debate and contention among men; sowing the seeds of discord, and setting them at variance with one another; and taking a delight and pleasure in the dissentions and quarrels of other men.

Διχοστασία *Seditions.* The same with *schisms* in other places of the new testament; dividing from the rest of our Christian brethren, and setting up distinct and separate communions, without a plain and absolute necessity. The consequences of separate communions in the church are so numerous; namely, by weakening and destroying the power of the church

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to reſtrain vice and wickedneſs, and ſo giving a looſe to all irreligion and prophaneſs; by aboliſhing all Chriſtian charity; by bringing a diſeſteem on the moral duties of religion, which are the life and ſubſtance of it, turning them into zeal for a party, refining of it into airy and fantaſtical opinions; and, in ſhort, by defeating all the ends of God in conſtituting a church. The conſequences, I ſay, of ſeparate communions, are ſo many and dreadful, that wherever that load of guilt will lie, it will be inſupportable. There is not any thing in this world that ought to be more clear or undoubted, than the cauſe for which a man ſeparates, and it muſt be of weight enough to out-ballance all theſe, and the many more evils that enſue. A man had need of a full conviction of his judgment, ſo as to leave no room for doubt, ſince the Apoſtle ſays here, that they who are guilty of this ſin *ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

The next αἱρεσεις *Hereſies*, do differ from *ſeditions* or *ſchiſms* in this, that a ſchiſm is a ſeparation from the communion of the church without a ſufficient cauſe; a hereſy is when men do not only ſeparate, but do likewiſe, in oppoſition to the church, maintain doctrines openly and directly deſtructive of the faith of Chriſt, and purity of the Goſpel; ſuch as if they perſiſted in, though they were of the communion of the church, they ſhould be cut off from it.

φθονοι *Envyings*; by which is ſignified the baſeſt

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fest passion of the soul, grieving at the successes and prosperities of others; the having our eye evil because God is good.

Φόνοι *Murders*; i. e. not only the taking away the life of another unlawfully, but being any way accessary to it, wishing it, or being pleased with it when it is done; and therefore instanced here, because the preceding passions dispose men for the committal of it.

Μέθαι κῶμοι *Drunkennesses, Revellings*; all excesses in drinking and eating, and those extravagances that are consequent to them.

It follows, *and such like*, to shew, that he hath named here only the most common and principal lusts and affections, and supposes the other sinful lusts and affections as well known by the light of nature as these. I am now to consider

IIdly, The most effectual means and method of getting a conquest over all our lusts and affections; and I shall at present instance only in three.

1. And 1st, whosoever will gain a conquest over all his passions and appetites, must begin with a constant and regular temperance; the first appetite which must be effectually overcome, is that we have to eating and drinking; till a man hath gained a conquest over himself in this point, all other endeavours for the suppressing and restraining his affections and lusts, will prove fruitless and vain; it is in truth no other than heaping on fuel to make our lusts burn more violently, and then labour-

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ing to extinguiſh them. There is nothing we eat and drink beyond the juſt proportions, but is poiſon to our nature, and directly deſtructive of all inclinations to goodneſs both in body and mind. Intemperance is the ſure and immediate cauſe of unchaſtity, which of all manner of ſin hath the moſt fatal tendency to the defacing and aboliſhing all ſenſe of virtue and holineſs; inſomuch that a man may have other virtues and vices, both of them in no ſmall degrees, but this is utterly inconſiſtent with all kinds and degrees of virtue; it is infection to our whole nature; it ſpreads confuſion over the whole man like a leproſy; the very mind and conſcience is defiled by it; and for the time it remains unreſtrained and unmortified, it ſuſpends all exerciſe of virtue and goodneſs; of piety and holineſs; and, if it continues to be indulged and gratified, it quite extinguiſhes the grace of God, and leaves the man void of all religion: There are but too many living inſtances of perſons thus dead to all ſenſe of virtue and holineſs.

Then, as to the effect of intemperance in the mind; the extreams of gluttony and drunkenneſs have ſuch immediate viſible effects, that they put a man intirely out of his own power, paſt any conteſt with his luſts and affections. But I am now ſpeaking of leſſer degrees of intemperance, which, though they do not commonly go by the names of gluttony and drunkenneſs, do however diſorder and impair the mind, render its operations dull and inactive;

inactive; so that notwithstanding many good purposes and resolutions, we cannot proceed with constancy in this great work; and experience will convince us what interruption one intemperate meal will give to the work of piety and religion. They who will make any commendable progress in the crucifying their affections and lusts, and obtaining good degrees of those virtues and graces that are contrary to them; who will bring their minds to habitual holiness and a heavenly temper; to meekness and humility, and all the graces of a devout and pious soul, must bring themselves to that pass, that they shall command their appetites, with respect both to the quantity and quality, of such meats and drinks as they find prejudicial to the health either of body or mind. Every man *that strives for the mastery*, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 25, *is temperate in all things*; which is meant more particularly of eating and drinking; since the allusion is to such as dieted themselves after a particular manner for running a race, and he proposes his own example; *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air*; because, as it follows, he by temperance and abstinence kept his body under, and brought it into subjection, which if he had not done, his progress in a Christian course would have been with great uncertainty; his struggle with his affections and lusts be but beating the air, and he himself would have been a cast-away. SERM. XXIX.

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2. He that will intirely get the better of himſelf in reſtraining all his appetites, and governing his paſſions, muſt take his mind off from this world, and place it upon the other: This indeed looks like a very general ſaying, and in its full extent takes in all the buſineſs of religion; but I ſpeak of it now in a more reſtrained and limited ſenſe; and my meaning is, that a man muſt once for all propoſe to himſelf Heaven, and the happineſs of the life to come, as the chief end of all his actions; he muſt reſolve to ſave his ſoul, though it be at the expence of all the ſatisfactions and pleaſures of this life; and poſſeſs his mind thoroughly with this thought, *what ſhall it profit a man if he gained the whole world and loſe his own ſoul.* He may be very induſtrious in the buſineſs of this world, and it is often his duty ſo to be; but in the midſt of the greateſt hurry of worldly affairs, our mind muſt be ſo looſe to them, that the main bent of our thoughts and inclinations muſt be the other way; and ſo forceably too, that all the things of this world, ſhall be ſubſervient to another. It is in this ſenſe our bleſſed Saviour ſays we cannot *ſerve God and Mammon*; either this world or the other will have the aſcendancy in us, and be the chief prevailing motive; and that which is uppermoſt in our thoughts, will have the beſt title to our ſervices.

Now when this is once become the firm and unſhaken purpoſe of the mind, and that we have laid down to ourſelves a fixt and determinate

terminate ſcope, then of courſe all the powers and faculties of ſoul and body take a biaſs that way, we have our eye upon it through the whole courſe of our lives, and it becomes the object of all our paſſions and inclinations, inſomuch, that from the hour that a man thus ſets his mind upon heaven, he ſtrikes off thoſe bands that tye him down to this world; he is diſengaged and at liberty, and all the things of it begin to loſe the power and force they have to work upon his paſſions and affections; and then he will find the work of crucifying them eaſy and practicable: *where your treaſure is*, i e. your main ſcope and great end, *there will your hearts be alſo*, all your deſires and longings will be that way; we ſhall be ever purſuing of it; all our affections and paſſions will center there; it is that will ſway and influence them all, and though there be ever ſome reluctances and contrary tendencies in the fleſh, which may occaſion many interruptions, yet whenever the mind hath time to deliberate, the great end we have laid down to ourſelves will prevail. SERM. XXIX.

Thus it was that St. Paul was *crucified to the world*, and the world to him; the things of this life became dull and inſipid to him, trifling and untempting, ſo that he was paſt being ſeduced by them. He had loſt all taſte and reliſh for them, he counted them all but dung, and was as unmoved by them, as if he had neither ſenſe or appetites left; ſo ſtrongly had he impregnated his ſoul with a great opinion

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opinion of the croſs of Chriſt, and ſet his heart upon the view he had to the glorious conſequences of his death and ſufferings.

3. Another great means of crucifying our affections and luſts is the uſe of voluntary mortifications and ſelf-denials. When any thing becomes the occaſion of ſin to us, and hath the force of a temptation likely to prevail upon us, whether our company, our diverſion, our food, nay, our buſineſs or any worldly enjoyment whatſoever, we muſt deny it our ſelves be it ever ſo dear to us, ever ſo agreeable. This is matter of indiſpenſible duty; this is not in our choice; for thoſe temptations which are not to be overcome when they are upon us, muſt be always kept at a diſtance. The mortifications and ſelf denials I am now ſpeaking of, are more voluntary, namely, what St. Paul, 1 Timo. iv. 8. calls *bodily exerciſe*, which he ſays, *profiteth little*, i. e. they are of no value, if compared with that holineſs they are only the means of acquiring, that righteouſneſs which he oppoſes to it which is *profitable for all things*, i. e. truly valuable in it ſelf, and which intitles us to the bleſſings of this life and another, ſo that conſidered in themſelves, and put upon the level with righteouſneſs, or in oppoſition to it, they are of no weight at all; but as they are means and inſtruments of acquiring that holineſs, they are of great value. This bodily exerciſe conſiſts in frequently reſtraining ourſelves in

in our lawful pleasures; and occasions pain and uneasiness in the use of things disagreeable to our sensual appetites, habitually crossing and thwarting our inclinations and desires, and using them to disappointments, even in instances no where forbid. This becomes matter of duty in some cases, where the power of sin in us cannot be broke without a rigorous course of severities; some kinds will not be cast out without fasting and prayer: and this expression in the text, of crucifying our affections and lusts, supposes such prevalent corruptions in our nature, that they are not to be overcome without the use of such mortifications and self-denials, and particularly without chastening our soul with fasting, as David speaks, which is therefore so much recommended in the New Testament, wherefore if in the denying your lusts and affections, and in the use of these voluntary self-denials and mortifications, you find uneasiness and regret and trouble, consider that the flesh is then a crucifying; the more pain and uneasiness, the better; and that whatsoever the anguish and trouble is, it is vastly short of those pangs which were endured by our Saviour on the cross, and which we ourselves must endure, if God should call us to it. SERM. XXIX.

Now from hence appears the great advantage of all afflictions and sufferings, and the reason of that stress which is laid on them in the New Testament, in order to the attainment of evangelical holiness; namely, because

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of the direct tendency they have to ſubdue and mortify all our corrupt inclinations, to humble the mind, and take it off from the things of this world. Rom. viii. 29. it is ſaid that *whom he did foreknow, he did predeſtinate to be conformed to the image of his ſon*, (i. e.) by ſufferings; theſe having ſo great an efficacy to form us to the image and likeneſs of the ſon of God. Therefore St. Paul tells us, Phil. iii. 10. that his earneſt ambition was to be *made conformable to his death*, by ſuffering as he did, who himſelf was made *perfect through his ſufferings*: and he ſays in another place, that he bore in his *body the marks of the Lord Jeſus*, that is, his ſufferings, which gave him ſuch a reſemblance of his Saviour.

The pains, and labours, and miſeries, incident to us all in this life, are ſo neceſſary to wean us from it, and crucify all our affections and luſts, that the curſing of the ground, and dooming of man to eat his bread in the ſweat of his brow, ſeems to be turned into the greateſt bleſſing. For to what ſtupendous height of wickedneſs would mankind have arrived to, if they had all variety of incitements to work upon their luſt and paſſions, without theſe frequent and powerful checks and allays.

It is true, that if the afflictions come upon us for the teſtimony of a good conſcience, and profeſſion of the truth of the Goſpel, the bearing of them with patience carries with it an additional merit. But however they come upon us, there is this great and excellent

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uſe to be made of them, and therefore, what we are to do is, by a perfect reſignation to the will of God, to turn them as far as we are able, into voluntary acts of mortification and ſelf-denial; this is ſo far from being any height of fancy, or abſtracted thought, that it will be literally performed if we make the right uſe of them, and apply them all as happy opportunities of crucifying our affections and luſts, and taking off all the paſſions of the mind from this world, to place it upon another. SERM. XXIX.

And there is this difference between making a good and proper uſe of thoſe afflictions which come upon us unaccountably, by a general providence, and thoſe which are apparently for the profeſſion of truth; that the former ſuppoſes in the mind a full conviction of the over ruling hand of God in all things that befal us, and a firm perſwaſion that God will make all things work together for our good in the end.

Having thus ſpoke of the moſt effectual means of performing this great work of crucifying our luſts and affections, I am now come to the third thing I propoſed.

III. Namely, to inſtance in two or three things, in order to prevent miſtake, and for the more prudential conduct of ourſelves herein.

1. And firſt then, the wiſeſt and the ſhorteſt courſe we can take is, to mark out that luſt or ſinful affection which is moſt reigning and

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and predominant in us. In all tempers there is ſome one ſin that prevails beyond all other, I mean till men are become intirely proffligate and quite alienated from the life of God; then they are equally diſpoſed for all wickedneſs with greedineſs. I am not now ſpeaking to theſe, but even in ſuch as have not caſt off all reſolutions of repentance and amendment, there is ſome one temptation which hath the aſcendancy of all other, and is apteſt to captivate and overcome them; in ſome it is unchaſtity; in others coveteouſneſs; in others vanity and ambition; in others gluttony and drunkenneſs; in ſome one, in ſome another, according to their different ages, or conſtitutions, or circumſtances: this darling luſt or deareſt affection, muſt be ſingled out, and we muſt engage it with the utmoſt vigour and reſolution; we muſt ſet ourſelves againſt it with all our might, and though the ſtruggle be painful, and the habit inveterate, yet we muſt never deſiſt nor yield, until we have got the better, and gained an intire conqueſt over ourſelves in that point.

When once this is performed to good effect, and that the one grand aſpiring ſin is thus thrown down; it's fall will be like that of Lucifer's, and carry with it a numerous train of inferior luſts and affections, which were all it's conſtant attendants and neceſſary adherents; for if you obſerve it, whatever luſt or paſſion predominates, it hath a ſtrange power to diſtort all the faculties of body and mind,

mind, and wrest them to it self, so as to make them all subservient to the great end it pursues; so that when the force of this great temptation is broke, the greatest part of our trouble and uneasiness is over; the rest will fall of course, and we shall find but little pain in crucifying whatsoever of them lurk behind, upon the first discovery. SERM. XXIX.

The only great danger here, is lest we should what this strongest tendency to sin in us is; for though people are commonly very quick and discerning in smaller instances of sins, yet they are blind to that which is most reigning and predominant in them. It may be for the same reason, that we can easily spy out lesser spots in the skin, but when the taint is general, and over runs the body, it deceives the view; when it is all one colour, we mistake it for our natural complexion, and are not solicitous for a cure. Upon this fatal mistake it is, that you will see men express much zeal in mortifying their other lusts and affections, and yet intirely overlook the great prevailing sin; though this be such trifling, that it is hard to find a comparison that will come up to the folly of it; it is as if one should sadly lament a little pain in the finger, when the whole body is affected with a mortal distemper: for this very reason it is, that so many struggle with temptation to so little purpose, and labour all the days of their lives with so little progress, because they began at the wrong end; they never gain a comenda-

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ble conqueſt over their ſpiritual enemies, because they never engage the main body, and ſpend all their ſtrength in skirmiſhes with the outguards only, and inconſiderable parties.

2. Another thing we are to obſerve, is that the great work of crucifying our luſts and affections, is not to be performed all at once; it is not one ſingle act of execution, as that of our Saviour's, from whence the expreſſion is taken; but a continued habit of breaking the force and power of them gradually. It is true, that upon the ſtrength of the firſt reſolutions, men may abſtain from all groſſer acts of every kind of ſin, but to gain an intire conqueſt over all the vitious inclinations of our nature, and bring them intirely under the conduct of reaſon and grace, ſo as to adorn our ſouls with all the inſtances of evangelical holineſs that are oppoſite to them; this is a work of time, and is to be the imployment of our whole lives.

If this work of crucifixion were to be effected by the violent effort of a furious zeal, many more would attain to it than do; they would ruſh upon it of a ſudden, and bear a great deal for a little time; but when the heat of their reſolution abates, and they find ſuch conſtant returns of the temptation, and feel the pain and anguiſh ſtill remain, then they can bear it no longer, and quit the glorious conqueſt for a little preſent eaſe.

Alas! the crucifying our affections and luſts, is more than giving our body to be burnt;

burnt; it is a work of mature deliberation, of a continual patience and steady perseverance. SERM. XXIX.

Those primitive Christians, whose forward zeal hurried them on to a voluntary resignation of themselves to torments and death, might this way have gratified the utmost ambition of their souls, by rendering their whole lives one continued martyrdom; they might thus have died daily with St. Paul, for months and years, and many revolutions of them.

3. Another thing we are to observe in crucifying our affections and lusts is, that we are not to expect that they can be totally extinguished. This was the foolish extreme of Pagan ignorance, and professedly maintained by a whole sect of men; and is at this day no small hindrance to the progress of virtue in Christians, who do not consider it: for being for this reason ignorant of the true bounds and nature of virtue and vice, it becomes matter of no small scruple and discouragement to them. All our natural appetites are necessary for the life, and health, and vigour of the body, and our passions are necessary instruments of virtue and goodness in the soul; in our first creation, they were the ornament of our nature, and the immediate seat of our perfection and happiness; and it is by the improvement of these, that we shall shine with rays of glory in another world.

The true import of this expression, of crucifying our lusts and affections is, that we regulate and govern them; that we break the

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violence of all our bodily appetites, ſo as to have it in our power to gratify them in ſuch degrees only, as reaſon and religion ſhall preſcribe; and that we ever deny them in all forbidden inſtances, that as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, *ſin might not reign in our mortal bodies*, and that we ſhould not *fulfil the luſts of the fleſh*; that we moderate our paſſions and rectify the deſires and affections of our minds; that we place them upon right objects, take off our affections ſo from the things on the earth, and ſet them on things above, that nothing here may ever move or tranſport us to any immoderate degree, that we may know how to be angry and not ſin; this the Apoſtle calls mortifying our *inordinate affection*. When our paſſions are brought under this regulation, even the moſt violent of them, by giving them a different turn, may be changed from the depth of ſin, to a great height and perfection of holineſs, as it was in the caſe of St. Paul. When they are thus under government, and exerciſed upon their proper objects, they give life to the will, render it active and forward, and inſpire it with vigour and ſprightlineſs.

Becauſe neither our appetites nor paſſions are to be totally extinguiſhed and deſtroyed, the ſtruggle between the fleſh and the ſpirit will never ceaſe intirely in this world; our appetites will be ever craving, and our affections will always have ſome tendency to ſuch things as give a preſent pleaſure and entertainment to the mind: while we live in this world there will

will be always some remains of them, and they will be the occasions of a continual exercise of virtue: but they are then said to be crucified, when they are restrained from being luxuriant and exorbitant; when they do not domineer or rage, when they resist but with faint and feeble efforts, when they struggle, but always without success, when though they crave continually, they are always croſt and disappointed, and in short, when they are so perfectly conquered, that though they live, yet it is like captives in chains and fetters, which serve only to grace our triumph. SERM. XXIX.

I cannot forbear observing here, how full an answer this is to the taunts and fleering objections of wicked and profligate men, against persons of a true profession of piety and holiness; by saying that they are not without the same appetites and inclinations with other men: it is true they are flesh and blood, and men of like passions with themselves; we have all the same natural propensions of body and mind, and thus far they say true, but that which makes the difference is, that some men restrain and govern them, and indulge them in such degrees only, and in such instances, as are permitted by the laws of God and nature; the other give them a loose, and gratify them in all instances indifferently, without regard to either. And this is so great a difference, that it renders one a good man, and the other a wicked; a distinction so great, that it will last to eternity. That is a true

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condition of ſoul, where the appetites are never indulged beyond the due proportion; where the affections obey, though unwillingly, and are under intire command, though againſt their own bent and tendencies; where they will yield, though againſt nature, and ſubmit to principles that thwart and contradict them, and comply with what is moſt oppoſite and diſagreeable to them.

IV. And now I am come to the 4th and laſt thing I propoſed, which was to apply the two motives in the text, to prevail on us to the performance of this great work.

1. The firſt of them is more plain from the text, namely, that they who do not crucify the affections and luſts are none of Chriſt's. A little before, where he numbers up many of thoſe affections and luſts that are to be crucifyed, it follows, *of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* i. e. remember, I warn you before hand, and tell you over and over, that they who live and die with any of theſe affections and luſts unmortified in them, can never hope to be ſaved: and then he ſays at the 24th verſe in the words of the text, that *they that are Chriſt's have crucified them already*; and if they have not done ſo, it is plain they are Chriſtians in name only, in a publick ſhew and appearance.

Now if a man had but a thorough ſenſe of the great infirmity and corruption of human nature,

nature, he would begin to be sensible how great and difficult the work is, this of crucifying all our affections and lusts, it is no obvious easy thing to be begun and carried on to perfection upon the strength of a few good resolutions, though ever so sincere; this is no more than a good beginning, and the cool of the morning with the labourers, and they cannot yet make a judgment of what they are to undergo in the heat of the day, when they find the stubbornness of their vitious inclinations abate but by insensible degrees, and that nature is ever and anon recoiling upon them, and withal, by what slow steps they will advance, in introducing into their souls the habits of all the contrary virtues, and by what continued and unwearied diligence, they must add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and so through all the virtues and graces of the Gospel. SERM. XXIX.

No man can know the difficulty of this work but by the trial, it is a long time before the anguish of this crucifixion abates, and one hardly ever arrives in this world to be altogether insensible of the pain, though he may bear it with resolution, and triumph over it. The many poor souls who are deceived with this notion, that they can commence saints of a sudden whenever they please to set about it, little consider this, and how great the change is which the Scripture supposes to be made in the inclinations and tendencies of our whole

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nature. Inſomuch that we ſhall with a mighty emphaſis, be denominated dead and crucified. Rom. viii. 10. *If Chriſt be in you, the body is dead becauſe of ſin*, ſays St. Paul, and he ſays of himſelf in another place, Gal. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Chriſt.*

And yet as great and difficult a thing as this is, it is the ſure mark of diſtinction between thoſe that are truly Chriſt's, and thoſe who are none of his. And it is not difficult for a perſon to form a judgment of himſelf from hence, whether he be a true and ſincere Chriſtian, or in profeſſion only. The Apoſtle hath put the matter upon a ſhort and peremptory iſſue, Rom. viii. 13. *If ye live after the fleſh he ſhall die; but if ye through the ſpirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live*; what then muſt they think of themſelves who grow old in their ſins? and through the whole courſe of their lives never have one ſerious thought of crucifying their affections and luſts, nor ever decline the gratifying of any of them, in all inſtances wherein they may do it without an open violation of the rules of civility, and the laws of the land. Should you point one of theſe men out, and tell him that he is no Chriſtian, or that it is mockery to call himſelf ſo, he would take fire at the affront, and though perhaps he hath an inward contempt for all revealed religion, and not the leaſt regard for it left, if he were to be cut off from the body of the church by excommunication, he would oppoſe it with all his

his worldly substance, and to his ability would stir up all the powers of Earth and Hell to wreck his revenge upon those who should attempt it; and all this for the name of christian, which will serve for no other purpose, but to render his damnation the more insupportable: with such monstrous absurdity and contradiction do men act in religion, who in all the things of this world are very quick and discerning. SERM. XXIX.

But I am sensible how little any discourse of this nature is like to touch those that are past feeling. I wish I could tell what to say that might leave a deep impression upon the minds of such, who having a plentiful fortune, and being in easy circumstances, never think of these severer duties of religion, and who, though they are guilty of nothing gross and exorbitant, yet indulge themselves in all tenderness and delicacy; live in wantonness and luxury, and who make it the study of their lives to gratify every longing desire, insomuch, that they are scared with the very expression of crucifying their lusts and affections. It is for this very reason our Saviour says, *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God*, because of the insuperable difficulty there is in restraining and mortifying our vitious inclinations, where there is affluence and abundance of the things of this world to gratify them all; they would do well to consider our Saviour's similitude is drawn

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from a natural impoſſibility, and that he reſolves the work of their ſalvation into the miraculous and extraordinary power of God.

2. The other motive I ſhall mention, is a very ſtrong one, though drawn from the text by implication only, that is, that unleſs we crucify them, they will crucify us, and be our tormentors both in this world and the next.

How far unmortified appetites and paſſions unreſtrained conduce to render people miſerable in this life, is the obſervation of every day. All the miſeries that come upon human nature proceed from this cauſe; and you ſhall rarely hear of any perſon ruined and undone, but it is originally from the gratifying of theſe: And how many inſtances are there of perſons, who, by one ſingle act of gratifying a luſt or diſorderly paſſion at their firſt ſetting out in the world, have entailed upon themſelves a ſeries of miſeries for their whole life; and by making but one falſe ſtep, have never been able to recover it. In ſome this happens all at once; in the caſe of others, the miſchief ſteals upon them more gradually, ſooner or later, as they give way to the indulgence of their ſinful luſts and affections.

But where it never comes to this extremity, there is not ſo poor a wretch as he that hath given himſelf up to the ſlavery of his ſenſual appetites and inordinate affections; and is come to that paſs, that he is ever eaſy or uneaſy in his mind, juſt as theſe are gratified or diſappointed; then it is in the power of

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every body and every thing to ruffle and dis- SERM.
compose him, to break his rest and destroy XXIX.
his quiet; any one with the breath of his
mouth may raise a storm in his breast, and
make it work like the troubled sea; and he is
never without perpetual uneasiness when all
things do not suit his fancy and humour, and
exactly hit his gust and relish.

Now this shews itself much more when men grow into years, when all their bodily appetites decay; when these become languid and feeble, then they are nice and curious; there is perpetual vexation and anxiety in the humouring of them; they are more craving than ever, and yet more difficult to be gratified; and that which compleats the misery of this condition is, that at the same time the appetites grow weaker, the passions grow stronger, and both of them much more difficult to be rectified and overcome than ever; insomuch that it is an observation well worth laying to heart, namely, that unless men obtain a conquest and mastery over their lusts and passions in the strength and vigour of their life, when they are in their greatest force and violence, the work is hardly ever to be done to good effect afterwards.

But there are yet worse effects of giving way to the inordinate and irregular passions and affections of the mind; for by a long and habitual indulgence of any of them, they often gain such an ascendency over a man, that he shall be intirely out of his own power, and it shall end in some degree of frenzy and distraction.

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I do not ſay that this is always the cauſe of a diſturbed imagination and diſordered reaſon; but it is more commonly ſo than is generally believed; and it is often a degree of madneſs before it goes by that name. The diſorder of the head begins in the heart; they ſet their hearts upon ſome worldly enjoyment, upon which their minds dwell ſo long, and all their affections are ſo intenſely employed upon it, that their thoughts are fixed; and that alone can move them, and every thought or mention of it moves them intemperately. This ſame holds true in a great variety of inſtances of this ſort; inſomuch, that nothing is more ordinary than to ſee people ſo far gone in the habitual indulgence of ſome ſinful affection, that they are paſt all cure, from the reaſonings either of themſelves or others; and when they are thus poſſeſt with their own, as with an evil ſpirit, it hurries them on to many extravagancies, and caſts them ſometimes into the fire, and ſometimes into the water. Nor will the diſorder of their reaſon take away the guilt of the ſins they are betrayed into by this, it being all wilful in its cauſe, and ſhould have been prevented by a timely reſtraint and regulation of thoſe paſſions which have brought them to that.

This I take to be much the caſe of melancholy. It is true, ſome conſtitutions are more diſpoſed for it than others; but in all, when it is indulged to that degree as to impair the reaſon, it too often proceeds from the predominance

minance of some sinful passion or affection; such as discontentment at their condition; want of faith, and distrust of God, and his promises to us through the merits of a crucified Saviour; or from something of that nature which they let grow upon them, till it takes full possession of their minds; and thence it proceeds to the unreasonable scruples, and groundless fears and despondencies, of a religious melancholy; whereas it was all at first the sin of their souls, which it was their business and their duty to have rectified in time. SERM. XXIX.

And thus it is with those splenetick pangs and agonies of the mind, which some people describe to be so grievous and terrible. This passes currently for a distemper altogether of their body; whereas it is too often the sin of their souls, and takes its first rise from affections unmortified, and passions too intently bent upon the things of this world: Sometimes from fear of some misfortunes falling upon them in this world, they know not how nor when: But all fears unaccountable or groundless are sinful. Sometimes from covetousness, or envy, or anger; nay, sometimes from malice, and want of opportunity of revenge: Sometimes from ambition, and a close intention of the mind upon worldly schemes and projects. When these, or any thing of this nature fastens upon the mind, so as to grow troublesome and uneasy to a man in his retirement, then it gets the name of a disease, and then it is a ready excuse for sin; it is at last indeed

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indeed a bodily diſtemper; for the continuance of any of theſe affections does operate upon the body till it grows into an habitual infirmity: This again infects the mind, and then indeed the help of phyſick is neceſſary to work the cure. But it is very often laid upon the body, when the diſorder is in the mind; and is in truth a predominance of ſome ſinful paſſions and affections, and a want of thoſe evangelical graces, which, if rightly improved, would ſettle and compoſe the mind.

Now as to another life, how far unmortified affections and luſts will contribute to the miſery of the damned, is impoſſible to conceive; but that they will do ſo, is more than probable from thoſe ſad effects we ſee of them in this life. And I take this to be the very reaſon of the precept of crucifying them; becauſe the wiſdom of God doth ſee, that otherwiſe they will render us eternally miſerable; for certainly damnation and miſery in another world, will follow by a neceſſity more natural and inevitable, than is generally thought.

It is obſerved, that when the health and vigour of the body decays by age or infirmity, all its appetites that have been habitually and immoderately gratified, leave ſo deep an impreſſion on the mind, that they remain there to the laſt, in full ſtrength, and become then more inſuperable than when they were in the body. And if the defilement of fleſhly luſts, can thus taint the very mind and conſcience even in this life, it is more than probable that the wretch

wretch will carry them all to another world with him. And what a deplorable condition of soul must that be, when he hath no power left for gratifying his apperites to the things of this world, and hath not the least inclination or desire for the things of another; when he hath nothing now to expect, but the time when all the great variety of lusts and passions in human nature, shall revive again, and render him fit company for those infernal fiends; of whom we can form no conception now, but under the similitude of a body racked and distorted with raging lusts and furious passions. It is no wonder that libertines and sensualists when they come near their end, are observed to cling to this world, loath to let go their hold; and catch at every little hope of life, as a drowning man would at a bulrush; and surely they must have no slight notion of what the torment of insatiable lusts and raging passions in another world must be, who run the hazard of everlasting burnings, rather than undergo the pain and anguish of denying the gratification of them in this life. SERM. XXIX.

On the contrary, if we persist with resolution and constancy in crucifying these affections and lusts, till we get intirely the command of them, it is the most glorious conquest in the universe. Our whole nature is then put into a posture and disposition for that glorious change at the last day; for the mighty power of God to carry on that improvement, wrought by the assistance of his grace in

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in us here, to inconceivable degrees of perfection. This brings us to that heavenly temper that will one day render us fit converſation for thoſe celeſtial ſpirits, who are in their firſt make framed to love, joy, peace, and all thoſe gentler paſſions of the mind, which we with ſo much pains attain to here below, and will qualify us to be partakers of their bliſs.

When a man hath arrived to this heavenly temper, ſo as to be perfectly diſengaged from this world, and his affections all bent towards another; when he is athirſt for God, and all the deſires and longings of his ſoul are towards him, then he hath laid a foundation for peace. Peace with God; with all good men here; with ſaints and angels hereafter; for eternal eaſe and quiet, and everlaſting peace in himſelf.

And may with an humble confidence ſay with St. Paul, Gal. ii. 20, *I am crucified with Chriſt, nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: And the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me.*

SERMON

SERMON XXX.

The great neceſſity of purity.

JAMES iii. 17.

The wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.

NOthing hath done Chriſtianity more harm, than that humour which hath more or leſs prevailed in all ages of the church, of refining upon its doctrines, and making them more myſterious and ſpiritual than they really are. As far as they are deſigned to have an influence upon our lives, nothing can be more plain, and eaſy, and intelligible; nor better fitted for the encouragement of virtue, and utter ſubverſion of all degrees of vice and wickedneſs, when they are conſidered and urged with that ſimplicity they were firſt delivered. But by this means men take off the edge and power of the Goſpel; they turn it all into air and notion; ſo that inſtead of being a rule

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rule for life; a light and direction for our paths, and powerful motive to ſolid virtue and holineſs, it thus becomes the entertainment of men's fancies, and too often works no effects beyond thoſe powerful impreſſions it leaves on the imaginations of men.

This was the firſt policy of the Devil againſt Chriſtianity, and the greateſt ſtratagem that ever he put in practice to defeat its ends, and make it as uſeleſs as he could to the great purpoſe for which it was deſigned, the ſubverſion of vice and wickedneſs, and reformation of the world. For no ſooner had the Goſpel been preached, and the number of converts were multiplied, and that people were taken with its ſimplicity and agreeableneſs to the natural ſenſe of their minds, but there aroſe a ſort of people, who turned all its doctrines into myſtery, to avoid the practice of its precepts. The Goſpel was too low and mean for them, and but a beggarly element; and therefore they would outdo the Apoſtles themſelves, and go beyond all mankind in divine knowledge, and myſteries, and revelations, inſomuch that they were called Gnoſticks, from that profoundneſs of knowledge which they arrogated to themſelves.

Thus they wrapt up all the clear light of the Goſpel in clouds and obſcurity, that they might work the works of darkneſs; and this they called wiſdom, and knowledge, and a degree of revelation out of the reach of any but thoſe of their own way. And therefore they pitied and deſpiſed all thoſe who could find

find no way to diſpenſe with their duty; and wrought out their ſalvation by a ſolid intire virtue, and a pure and undiſſembled holineſs. SERM. XXX.

It is to theſe exalted knowing men in ſpiritual matters, that St. James here in my text oppoſes the wiſdom from above. Under pretence of knowledge and myſtery, they had found out a way to evade the diſcharging all neceſſary practical duties, and had incorporated all vitious laſcivious practices into the very body of their religion. And therefore at the 15th verſe of this chapter he tells them, this wiſdom deſcendeth not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, and deviliſh. Thoſe elevations of mind, and pretences to ſomething very great and extraordinary in religion, were not from God, but from the Devil. Whatever gave any encouragement to vice and wickedneſs, and all arts of reconciling ſin with the Chriſtian religion, could not be from any infuſion of the Spirit of God, but the deluſions of their fancies, and came from Hell. *Who*, ſays he, *is the wiſe man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him ſhew out of a good converſation his works with meekneſs of wiſdom*; i. e. if any man will approve himſelf to be truly wiſe, let him ſhew his wiſdom, not in nice and intricate opinions, in pretences to revelations and myſteries, and unaccountable elevations of mind, out of the way of other people; but in the prudent conduct and management of his whole life, and a conſtant univerſal diſcharge of thoſe virtues and gra-

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ces which are plain and obvious to every body. And here in the words of my text he proceeds to give a character of the true wiſdom from above, or that which proceeds from the holy ſpirit of God, as it is diſtinguiſhed from all falſe pretences whatſoever. *The wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure*, &c. So that here are ſix marks of that truly divine wiſdom, and the firſt of theſe ſhall be the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe.

I. And firſt, the wiſdom from above is ſaid to be pure, ἁγνή; *i. e.* chaſte; or, as another Apoſtle expreſſeth it, by the cleanſing ourſelves from filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, from all unchaſte inclinations of the body, and impure deſires of the mind; from all immodeſty in outward deportment, and from all the defilements of the fancy or imagination. This is the firſt property of that truly divine and heavenly wiſdom, which St. James here places in direct oppoſition to that ſpecious pretence of elevated ſanctity and holineſs in thoſe firſt hereticks, who under colour of a more refined and ſpiritual religion, and of more extraordinary degrees of knowledge, deſpiſed the practice of plain ſolid virtues; ſuch as juſtice, and temperance, and particularly chaſtity; inſomuch that their conſciences were eaſy, and they frequently entertained themſelves with religious tranſports, in the midſt of all manner of laſcivious practices.

Now though nothing in nature can be more abſurd, and contrary not only to Chriſtianity, but

but to that common ſenſe of good and bad, of vice and wickedneſs, which is in every one: Yet there are not wanting, even at this day, many who lye under this fatal deluſion; and think that their devotion and outward piety, their ſpiritual vouchſafements, their confident perſuaſion of their election, their frequent religious heats, and the zeal and warmth of their imaginations, ſhall out-power the guilt of all their unchaſtity and laſciviouſneſs, and ſanctify theſe worſt of vices. It is this which ſupports the eſteem of theſe things in the hearts of many, and which puts them upon making it the main buſineſs of religion to labour after theſe things inceſſantly, even to the utter neglect of a thorough reformation of all vice, and the practice of ſolid virtue. SERM. XXX.

I am perſuaded I ſpeak to their conſciences, and reach the very bottom and firſt ſpring of all thoſe ſpiritual deluſions, when I ſay, that which makes them ſo intent and eager after things of that nature, is a ſecret opinion they have, that they will in a great degree compenſate the want of a ſtrict diſcharge of theſe moral practical precepts of Chriſtianity. Thus they turn the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs, going on in habitual lewd and vitious practices, together with a conſtant diſcharge of all things which carry the appearance of holineſs: Their pangs of conſcience, and elevations of mind, have their due returns, and ſucceed each other. So that the zeal of thoſe people is a ſtrange kind of monſtrous compoſition,

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made up of the heats of luſt, and the warmths of a religious frenzy: The ſaint and devil is united in one perſon, they are now dejected, and again very full of confidence and aſſurance, both in very great extreams; but their imagination commonly gets the better of their judgments, quiets their conſciences, and leaves them eaſy at the laſt. There is a lively deſcription of this ſort of people in the Proverbs, *There is a generation who are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not waſhed from their filthineſs:* And the Apoſtle's deſcription of them is, that *they hold the myſtery of faith, but not in a pure conſcience.* They believe all the articles of faith, and are very much affected on all occaſions with the conſideration and mention of them; but are manifeſtly defective in that intire reformation of life which the Goſpel requires.

The chief cauſes and ground of this deluſion ſeem to be one or both of theſe things, either

1. That opinion ſo many have taken up of their abſolute election, a doctrine ſo directly deſtructive of virtue and goodneſs, that it hath ſent many a ſoul to hell, with a full perſwaſion of their being ſaved; becauſe they did not well conſider, that the Goſpel will never ſave any but thoſe that it reforms. So that though people *were enaued with the gift of prophecy, and unaerſtood all myſteries and all knowledge; though they had all faith, ſo that they could remove mountains*; yet, without a ſtrict obſervance of the precepts of the Goſpel, and of thoſe

thoſe of chaſtity among the reſt, they ſhall all avail them nothing; as the Apoſtle ſays in the caſe of charity, they ſhall be as *ſounding braſs and a tinkling cymbal*; nothing but an inſignificant empty noiſe, without any thing of the real power and efficacy of religion. SERM. XXX.

2. Another too general cauſe of theſe groundleſs preſumptions is, their inclinableneſs to lay all their ſins, of this nature eſpecially, upon the account of infirmity; they look upon the temptations of this kind to be the greateſt that are incident to human nature, and therefore they hope it is not in their power to conquer them. So that they appeaſe the clamours of their conſciences with this thought, that their minds are pure, though their bodies are polluted; and though they do indeed commit ſin, yet it is with no hearty concurrence of their judgments; it is *the evil they would not that they commit*; and they are the more confident of their being ſins of unavoidable infirmity, becauſe they ſerve God after the inner man, in all other inſtances of devotion and piety. But as it is the moſt profound hypocriſy, ſo this excuſe doth but render it more dangerous and incurable; for this very thing, as the Apoſtle argues in that whole chapter, from whence they fetch their comfort; this very thing, is what will render their ſin yet more ſinful and damnable. For to commit any ſins with a full perſwaſion of mind that they are ſuch, is one of the greateſt aggravations in the world; they are already accuſed by

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their own conſciences; and though they acquit themſelves by a vain confidence of their own religious performances, yet as St. John ſays, *God is greater than their conſciences*, and will ſurely condemn them. And it is then only we can have a juſt confidence towards God, when our hearts condemn us not; *i. e* when we cannot accuſe ourſelves of any unmortified luſts, or wilful ſins that we live in.

The Evangelical precepts of chaſtity of body and purity of mind, are indiſpenſible; and God will ſurely judge all whoremongers and adulterers, whether theſe ſanctified and timorous ones, or the more bold and profane; nor ſhall any laſcivious perſon enter into the kingdom of God or of Chriſt.

All the devotion and piety in the world, will not atone for the want of any one virtue whatever; and particularly that of chaſtity. The true life and power, and energy of religion, doth not conſiſt in the outward pomp and ſolemnity, but in the inward ſubſtantial change of the heart and mind; in the renewal of our nature, by a perfect conqueſt over all our ſinful inclinations; and inſtead of them, introducing into our ſouls all the virtues of morality, and the divine graces of the Goſpel; among which, this of purity of mind is one.

Having thus laid open that hypocriſy of men, which it was St. Paul's deſign here to expoſe; I ſhall obſerve to you a few things concerning the nature and excellency of this moſt divine virtue of purity.

1. And

1. And firſt, it is the foundation of all other virtues and graces whatſoever; and therefore the Apoſtle ſays, *the wiſdom from above*, or that religion which is from God, *is chaſte and holy*, and allows no degrees of impurity, either of body or mind. He places this qualification of it in the front of all the reſt, and ſays, *it is firſt pure*, or *chaſte*, becauſe this is a neceſſary diſpoſition for all goodneſs, and a fruitful parent of all virtue and holineſs; inſomuch that without this, it is utterly in vain to endeavour after virtue and goodneſs in any other inſtance whatſoever. Let a perſon get but this conqueſt over himſelf in this, and then all other graces and virtues will flow in upon the ſoul: And it is eaſy for one who hath acquired habitual purity of body and mind, to be any thing elſe that is good. When they have obtained this glorious victory, nothing in religion can be too hard and excellent for them: Nay, I may ſay, it is hard for them not to be good in all other reſpects; for when this clog is removed that weighs down the ſoul, it mounts of its own accord towards Heaven, for its original deſires were there: And it is the ſenſual pleaſures of this life that ſink it as low as Hell; and inſtead of being inveſted with the bright glory of Seraphims, they leave it in endleſs flames, which ſhall never ceaſe to burn, but never purify its droſs. SERM. XXX.

By the attainment of this purity, the moſt inveterate prejudices againſt religion and virtue are removed; then they have a clear proſ-

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pect of the innate excellency and neceſſity of them; they make a true judgment of things, and can think rightly, and conſider coolly, and give a juſt weight to all the arguments for religion, and motives to virtue; which they can never do who give way to their luſts, and indulge their ſenſual appetites: For of all ſins thoſe of impurity have the directeſt tendency to blind the underſtandings of men, and take away the uſe of their reaſon, as well as of their paſſions in matters of religion. It ſpreads a dark cloud over all the faculties of the mind, ſo that they neither ſee nor conſider any thing beyond this world. It utterly deſtroys all ſenſe of virtue, and leaves no place in the ſoul for grace or goodneſs; it hardens the heart as if it were ſeared with a hot iron; their very mind and conſcience is defiled, as St. Paul ſpeaks, ſo that they become callous and inſenſible, and hardly ever to be reſtored to their native ſoftneſs and temper again. And therefore in another place, ſpeaking of thoſe who gave themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, he ſays, *they have their underſtandings darkened, being quite alienated from the life of God, becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts*; that they are paſt all feeling, and therefore *they work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs*; which are ſentences ſo full and ſignificant, to expreſs the deſperate condition of all thoſe who are given up to this; how it waſtes the conſciences, embaſes their minds, obliterates all ſenſe of God and goodneſs, and leaves them under a fatal neceſſity of damnation;

tion; ſo that they ſeem to be already in the poſſeſſion of the Devil. I ſay the Apoſtle expreſſeth himſelf ſo poſitively to this purpoſe, that it might well ſtrike all thoſe with horror and confuſion, who are perſons of the ſame ſtamp and character. SERM. XXX.

2. Of all virtues, this of purity gives us the greateſt likeneſs of God. He is a ſpirit, and therefore the felicities and perfections of the divine nature are all intellectual, and farther removed from ſenſual pleaſures than we can imagine: And therefore it is ſaid, that they who have any hopes of glory, *purify themſelves, even as God is pure.* They imitate this purity of God by weaning themſelves from all ſenſual pleaſures, and fixing their minds upon the felicities of heaven. When the minds of men are purged from thoſe groſs and earthly pleaſures, then it is that the love of God takes place, and that our bodies become the Temples of the Holy Ghoſt; and by his ſecret powerful operation, we are formed in all our faculties to the likeneſs of the divine perfections. Whereas the contrary vice, by a natural efficacy, creates in us a hatred of God; it defaces the image of our Maker in us, and ſpreads the likeneſs of the Devil over all our faculties, by giving them a diſpoſition to all manner of vice, ſo that they have not one ſincere inclination to goodneſs left. But when the beauty of holineſs ſhall become viſible to all the world, then how ſhall we be raviſhed with the ſight

of

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of a pure ſoul transformed into the ſimilitude of Chriſt, by being weaned from the pleaſures of ſenſe; then we ſhall ſee what are the charms of a chaſte mind and a pure ſoul, which in the midſt of even this infirm ſtate, breathes out nothing but holy wiſhes of future enjoyments, when all the deſires of it are towards heaven, when the mind is athirſt for God, and can ſay with greateſt ardency and vehemence, O! when ſhall I come to appear before God, that I may behold his glory, and be made fit for the converſation of thoſe unpolluted ſpirits, who kept their ſtation and never knew ſin? How different is the ſtate of theſe men from the condition of thoſe who are given up to the gratification of their luſts, who cannot think of God without terror, nor of heaven without deſpair, nor of their ſins without a ſecret dread and fearful expectation of future vengeance; for alas! all theſe gaudy incentives to luſt, muſt firſt be turned into rottenneſs and corruption, and then become fuel for the infernal flames.

3. The 3d thing I ſhall obſerve to you concerning the nature of this moſt divine virtue of purity is, that it muſt be intire; it admits of no degrees of impurity, and it muſt be had to a good perfection or not at all. We may have a moderate degree of any other grace or virtue, and continue at a ſtay without any great improvement or decreaſe, but there is no mean in chaſtity. If there be any way given to impurity it knows no bounds, and

and when people will indulge it in any degree, it is ſurely no ſenſe of conſcience, but ſome temporal regard that reſtrains them from going farther. So that it is eaſy to be wholly and intirely chaſte, but nothing is more difficult than to be partly ſo. In reſpect of this virtue men are placed upon a precipice, and one falſe ſtep ſends them down a deep deſcent to the chambers of death, and their ſteps go down to hell with that violence, that though it's flames are within view, yet they have neither will nor power to draw back, but are hurried on to eternal death and damnation, with a clear proſpect and full conviction of what they are coming to. But where people reſolve to give no way to this ſin, and to be intirely pure, and cut off all the prologues and incentives to luſt and debauchery, and to avoid thoſe common levities of a mixt and promiſcuous converſation, which betray them to the firſt degrees of it, no virtue will become eaſier and better ſecured.

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If people would but carry a firm perſwaſion in their minds, that all degrees of this ſin are unlawful, and withal, that the leaſt degree of it leaves them in a full diſpoſition for the greateſt: I ſay if this were thoroughly conſidered, it would be an effectual motive to purity, to all thoſe who have any ſerious thoughts of ſalvation left.

Though of all ſins in the world, this leaves people under the greateſt difficulties of repentance and

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and reformation, yet if they have not ſinned away all deſire of purity and holineſs (for then their condition is deſperate) and that they have any ſincere purpoſe of becoming truly virtuous left, it is certainly in their power to break through all difficulties, until they arrive at a perfect chaſtity. An orderly conduct of their lives, and prudent choice of their converſation, a regular temperance and diligence in their calling, together with certain returns of prayer to almighty God. I ſay, a firm reſolution and obſtinate perſeverance in theſe things, will overcome the ſtrongeſt inclinations in our nature. In this as in all other temptations, if we ſet our minds to it, and our heart be in the work, we ſhall overcome all difficulties; for we cannot expreſs the mighty power of cuſtom, and the ſecret force of a habit, in any inſtance of virtue and goodneſs whatſoever; though it work its effects but gradually, yet if it proceed it is irreſiſtible; nothing is too ſtrong for it, nor is any obſtacle able to ſtand before it; it defeats all the powers of hell, and operates until it makes a change in us as great as if we were born again, and in a word, until virtue becomes eaſy, and pleaſant, and natural to us.

4. The laſt thing I ſhall obſerve to you concerning this continence or purity is, that no virtue whatſoever hath ſuch a tendency to give us comfort in the time of age or ſickneſs, and in the hour of death. There are two things chiefly which adminiſter comfort to a perſon

perſon in the time of extremity, and when he is about to depart this world; the one is a view of his paſt life, and the other the influences of the holy ſpirit of God. As to the SERM. XXX.

1ſt. A view of his paſt life, thoſe who in the time of youth and health did not get a conqueſt over themſelves in this point, and did not reſtrain and ſubdue their luſtful inclinations when they were at the ſtrongeſt, can never be able to judge of the ſincerity of their repentance, when they come into a condition of weakneſs and infirmity, for there are two conditions neceſſary to that repentance which is never to be repented of, ſorrow and amendment. As to their ſorrow, there is no judging of the ſincerity of this, becauſe every body is ſorry for their ſin, when they can ſin no longer; ſo that let the ſorrow and anguiſh of their minds be ever ſo great, yet it may be nothing more than what the Goſpel calls the ſorrow of the world, that worketh death, that is, ſuch a ſorrow as men conceive for any worldly croſs or diſappointment, which doth not at all contribute to mend what is amiſs, or retrieve the loſs, and provide a remedy, but ſerves only to vex and diſquiet the mind; ſo their ſorrow may be no other than the gnawings of a guilty conſcience, and apprehenſions they have of the deplorable condition they have brought themſelves to; and they have no way of judging of the ſincerity of it left, ſince the other neceſſary condition, that of amend-

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amendment, is then wholly out of their power. Men in age, and ſickneſs, and infirmity, may have a trial of moſt other virtues and graces in ſome degree, but when the ſins of luſt, and temptations to impurity have left them, the meaſure of their iniquity, in this reſpect, is filled up; they have ſlipt the ſeaſon for this virtue, which will never return again.

And beſides it is very obſervable, how perſons who in their younger days have given themſelves the looſe, and have indulged their vitious inclinations, do carry them with them to their graves; for as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *their very minds and conſciences are corrupted*: what were the appetites of the body, take ſuch deep root in the mind, that they remain there when the temptation ceaſes in the body, ſo that they become the exact emblem of the Devil, who though he be a ſpirit, and therefore can have no bodily appetites, yet is pleaſed and delighted with them.

But on the contrary, when a perſon in old age, or on his death bed, looks back upon his former life, and hath it to ſay that he exerciſed this virtue in its proper ſeaſon; that he brought his body under, and by the grace of God ſuppreſſed and overcame the ſtrongeſt tendency of human nature to vice and wickedneſs; and acquired habitual chaſtity in the greateſt ſtrength and vigour of life; that then he glorified God in this body; that he was modeſt and reſerved in his whole deport-

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ment, and that his chaſte converſation, was viſible to God and men. O! what a foundation has he laid for comfortable hopes of pardon and acceptance at the hands of God; what clear evidence this is for the truth and ſincerity of his repentance, and how ſure is he that he would do the very ſame, if he were to live his life over again. SERM. XXX.

2. Another thing which adminiſters comfort to a dying man, is the ſecret operation and influences of the holy ſpirit of God: no virtue doth ſo fit and prepare the ſoul for the entertainment of the Holy Ghoſt, which as he afforded help and aſſiſtance for the attainment of this virtue, ſo he will apply comfort and refreſhment to the ſoul, when it ſtands moſt in need of it. By purity more eſpecially, the body of a man becomes the Temple of the Holy Ghoſt, and he delights to dwell there, and where he dwells there muſt be peace of conſcience, and joy, and aſſurance, when he ſees them neceſſary for our ſupport and comfort.

There are ſecret and inſenſible ways, by which the holy ſpirit of God doth influence the mind, and convey ſtrength and comfort to our ſouls: by which I do not mean any ſuch viſible effects as ſhew themſelves by violent heats of the imagination, and are expreſt with extravagance of geſture and vehemence of ſpeech, and are but often the tranſports of ſuch as live in ſin, and die in raptures; for when

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when hypocrites through the courſe of their lives have got a cuſtom of diſſembling with themſelves and all the world beſides, it is juſt in God to give them up to ſtrong deluſions, that at the approach of death they ſhould believe a lie.

But the effects of the ſpirit are ſuch, as never will deceive any; it gives ſuch a peace of conſcience, a joy in the Holy Ghoſt, as creates a calmneſs all within; it is the ſtill voice of God that whiſpers ſalvation, and gives us ſuch an aſſurance as is full of humility; ſuch deſires of the preſence of God, and the glories of heaven, as are rightly tempered with fear and reverence; and ſuch a full truſt in the merit and mediation of Chriſt, as is accompanied with a modeſt diſtruſt of ourſelves and our own performances; and upon the whole matter, ſuch a degree of hope, as ſuffers us never to let go our hold and confidence, but wafts us ſafe over into the manſions of the bleſt; though our heads are giddy with ſcruples and deſpondencies by the way; where thoſe ſparks of light and uncertain dawnings of glory which are here afforded in the midſt of clouds and darkneſs, ſhall clear up into a perfect day, and leave us in the full fruition of an eternal weight of glory.

This bleſſed degree of hope and comfort in the hour of death, is the natural reſult of this moſt divine virtue; whereas on the contrary, no ſin like that of impurity empties the ſoul of grace, and ſo totally cuts off all communications

cations of the ſpirit of God: the body and mind are become foul and odious, and a fitter habitation for the unclean ſpirits of darkneſs, than for the Holy Ghoſt to dwell in; ſo that nothing ſets men at a greater diſtance from God, in whoſe preſence alone there is fullneſs of joy: and therefore when men are utterly deprived of all the emanations of his ſpirit, and totally ſeparated and cut off from him for ever, if they have not ſinned paſt feeling, if they can conſider and reflect, and have any thought at all left, there can be nothing but fright and aſtoniſhment; for when once they are wholly forſaken by the ſpirit of God, and that he is quite gone away, then all the terrors of hell ruſh in upon their ſouls. SERM. XXX.

It is a dreadful thing for the mind of man not to know which way to turn itſelf in the midſt of pain and weakneſs, and in the agonies of death, nor where to apply itſelf for help and comfort; there is no help from God, nor can we have it any where elſe. And therefore after the reſtleſs ſoul hath ſurveyed Heaven and earth, and left no place unſearched, it is forced to retire at laſt, that it might give itſelf up to horror and amazement, and acquieſce in miſery, without any expectation of relief, or the leaſt proſpect of ever being otherwiſe.

O! there is no deſcribing it! nor is it poſſible to imagine what it is to want the comforts of the ſpirit in the time of extremity; until they come to feel it, they cannot be ſen-

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ſible what it is for a man to look up to God, but in vain; to cry for ſome help and comfort, and yet to have no anſwer; to be aſſured that there is no help but from God, and yet to deſpair of it there; and to beg for mercy and pardon, and yet find no room for it.

This is what all are coming to, that give way to their ſins of impurity and laſciviouſneſs. And therefore I have now no more to do at preſent, but to exhort you, that no one perſon here may go out now from the preſence of that God of purity and perfect holineſs, without a thorough conviction of the great excellence and neceſſity of this virtue of purity, and of the ſtupifying, damning nature, of the contrary vices, that you may be prevailed upon to exerciſe this virtue in its proper ſeaſon, and acquire it while it is to be had.

By this means you will provide ſolid comfort for the time of age and weakneſs, and ſecure the conſolations of the ſpirit in the hour of death. You will render yourſelves amiable and lovely in the ſight of God, that immaculate being and eternal fountain of purity and holineſs, and you will become fit companions for thoſe glorious and ſpotleſs ſpirits which ſurround his throne, and for thoſe bleſſed Saints who have done the ſame before you, and who becauſe they kept themſelves undefiled, are now ſaid *to follow the Lamb, whither ſoever he goes.*

Let

Let us follow their example, by denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, *looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* SERM. XXX.

SERMON XXXI.

The divine eloquence of our Saviour considered.

JOHN vii. 46.

The officers answered, never man spake like this man.

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WHEN the chief Priests and Pharisees, the most inveterate enemies of our Saviour, saw that his divine discourses met with success among the people, they began to be apprehensive what might be the consequence; for *many believed on him*; insomuch, that the multitude was already divided, and they had reason to fear, as they did, that *the world might go after him*; and since they had no other way of confuting him but by force, they sent soldiers to apprehend him; who when they came, and heard those excellent discourses he made to the people at the feast, they returned without executing their commands; and made no other excuse for themselves but that in the words of this text, *that never man spake like this man.* They did not say for themselves that

that they could not find an opportunity, or that they feared the multitude, which they might have done, as the case stood, with great shew of probability; but they freely and ingenuously confessed the truth, that though they went with command and firm resolution to seize him, yet there were such charms and conviction in all he said, that he sent them away with a full perswasion that he was an excellent person. He spoke so well in his own defence, and reasoned so clearly concerning things, out of the reach of the common understanding of men before, that they were even amazed to hear, and had neither heart nor power left to lay hands upon him. SERM. XXXI.

I shall not stay to draw a comparison between those great names for oratory among the heathen, and the divine eloquence of our blessed Saviour; I shall only observe in short, that they adapted themselves and all they said to men's lusts and passions; to their corrupt appetites and inclinations, and took all advantages of their ignorance, and prejudice, and credulity; whereas our Saviour laid all that aside, and applied himself only to the purest reason of men, and their best and most regular inclinations; having no end but one, namely, to lay a firm foundation for holiness; they perswaded by soothing and cherishing the imperfections of nature; his discourses tended only to heal and rectify them, they moved with sensible representations only, he insisted on things spiritual and insensible; their great

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topicks were riches, and honours, and pleasures, and ease and splendor; his rhetorick was crosses and misfortunes, afflictions and miseries, torments and death; insomuch, that he preached what was altogether new to the world, that they were blessed that mourn; and that *through much tribulation men must enter into the kingdom of Heaven*; they used all the methods of delusion and fallacy, those *words of men's wisdom*; he overcame only by undisguised and naked truth. By this short comparison, we see how little those mighty standards of heathen eloquence begin to appear already; for in truth their oratory was but one great art of deceiving. How very different from this is that of our Saviour, who never spoke but that men might become more wise, and virtuous and holy? It is no strange thing that a great father of the primitive church made it the first of his three wishes, *to have seen our Saviour in the flesh*: But it may justly raise our admiration, that the second should be *the hearing St. Paul preach*; for who was more like to have gratified his curiosity, and filled his expectations, than he who was *the very word of God*, as he was the most excellent person that ever was, so he was the greatest orator. The tongues of men and angels are not able to describe this divine eloquence, according to the worth and dignity of it. But since he is our great Lord and Master whom we must follow, though at such an immense distance behind; and a guide that we

we must ever keep in sight, though we can never overtake him; and that we of the clergy are to imitate him in a double sense, as well in his manner of teaching, as in the practice of holiness; I shall enter upon the consideration of this divine eloquence of our Saviour; that through the assistance of that spirit that was on him without measure, among the other perfections of his most holy life, we may in some degree copy after him in this, which is the great privilege and glory of our order. And in doing this, I shall SERM. XXXI.

I. Consider the matter and substance of what he spoke, and the stile he used.

II. I shall consider some of those advantages our blessed Saviour had, beyond all others, to *spake as never man spake*; and how far he is imitable by us in those instances.

I. And first, as to the matter and substance of his speech, it excelled all others in these three respects.

1. That it was of things beyond the reach of men to conceive, those mysteries of Christianity which lay hid from the foundation of the world, and which it was impossible for the utmost strength of reason to discover any thing of. And indeed who could reveal the secret will and mind of God, besides him who came down from God? Who but he that was the eternal wisdom of the Father, could shew men that there was a satisfaction to be made to the justice of God for the sins of men? That God incarnate was to *lay down his life a ransom for many:*

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ny: and that through his blood, repenting ſinners were to be made clean? The whole world had been uſed to offer ſacrifices, in order to appeaſe their Deities; but he alone could diſcover to us, that *the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away ſin*; and therefore, that what efficacy there was in them, was only, as they had a reſpect to that one great ſacrifice, which alone could be a ſufficient atonement for them.

Who beſides could teach men, that a ſupernatural aſſiſtance was neceſſary to think rightly in religious matters, to help us to form true notions of God and ourſelves; and that we could never overcome our evil inclinations, and raiſe our minds to virtue and holineſs, by mere ſtrength of nature? He alone could teach how the loſt condition of mankind was to be reſtored; how our ſhattered and diſtempered nature was to be healed; and by what methods we are again to be reinſtated in the favour of God; how we are to recover the divine image we loſt in our fall, and again become perfect, *as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

He alone could teach us the doctrine of the Trinity; that we are to be *baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*; that *God is a Spirit, and muſt be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth*; that the inward rectitude of our minds is neceſſary to pleaſe him *who is the ſearcher of hearts*, and that he values no outward obſervances without it; that he *will have mercy, and not ſacrifice*; and

and that faith and repentance are the only condition of remiſſion of ſins and ſalvation. SERM. XXXI.

Which of the Philoſophers ever taught, that the happineſs of Heaven is to be obtained by ſorrow and lamentation; that *they are bleſſed who mourn, for they ſhall be comforted?* Which of them in all their laboured ſyſtems of morals ever equalled this, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye alſo unto them*; and for which the Roman Emperor raiſed to him a ſtatue, and placed him among the number of the Gods? Or where ſhall we find any thing like that other ſaying; *What ſhall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? And what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?* He only was able to ſpeak it *who brought life and immortality to light*, and could ſay to the thief on the croſs, *This day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe*; thereby diſcovering to us the happineſs of a pious ſoul in the ſtate of ſeparation.

He was the firſt that ever ſpoke plainly of the reſurrection of the body; and confuted the Sadducees, by ſhewing them, how *God was not the God of the dead, but of the living.* No one before him ever ſo much as mentioned a general judgment of all the world at once: He doth not only do this, but he deſcribes the very manner of it ſo particularly, that we ſhall ſcarce know more of it when we ſee it: That *before him ſhall be gathered all nations; that the angels ſhall ſeparate the good from the bad; that ſentence ſhall be pronounced on the wicked:* That

theſe

SERM. XXXI. *these shall go away into everlasting punishment, a lake of fire; but the righteous into life eternal.*

He only hath discovered to us, that the happiness of another life is not sensual; that we shall not subsist then after the gross manner we do here, but that we shall be as the Angels in Heaven.

These, and such like wonderful things of God, were the subjects of his discourse; truths of so exalted a nature, that his hearers could not but be amazed and delighted with them: And what he thus plainly and with authority declared, none had ever before given the least intimation of. And, good God, what monstrous and absurd fancies did the wise men of the heathen world amuse and cheat mankind with, instead of these truths of God! They substituted such wild notions and extravagant dreams, instead of them, that we cannot sufficiently wonder at the times of that profound ignorance and delusion.

2. He always spoke of these things which were of the greatest concern and importance to mankind. Those who were most noted for eloquence, employed it generally for a party or faction, or to serve their own or some other person's private interest; but his discourse was ever of things of universal consequence to all degrees of men in every age: What he spoke was not in order to those little ends which mankind busy themselves so much about. *Sed quæ ad unum istud necessarium promovendum*

dum spectant; namely, the eternal well-being of soul and body in another life: Not to put men in the way of getting riches and honours, but to teach them to *be contented with food and raiment*; and that if they *seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all other things* that are necessary *shall be added unto them.* This was the great scope and design of all his discourses, and he never spoke any thing but what had a tendency that way. His doctrine was not like that of the Scribes and Pharisees, empty and cold, trifling about tything, mint, and cummin, washing of pots, and shaping of philacteries; but about the weightier matters of the law, such as made men substantially good, reformed their minds, made them acceptable to God, and useful to men. They spent all their labour and pains in the very letter of the law, neglecting the plain signification of the words; but he explained and enforced that holiness and perfection of virtue which was signified by it. SERM. XXXI.

The substance of his discourse was wonderful in this, that the things he treated of were all very agreeable to the best reason of men, and suitable to those sentiments that are natural to all men, though the things were beyond their reach to find out, all divine and spiritual; yet there is a wonderful condescension in all he said to the frailty of human understanding: he did not only discover what could not have entered into the heart of man to conceive, but made them plain and easy to every

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every capacity, so that the true will of God is not now in Heaven, that we should say, *who shall go up for us to Heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do it, for the word is nigh unto us in our mouths and in our hearts, life and good, death and evil are set before every man*; insomuch that the meanest capacity, and the most illiterate person, knows more of those truths of God that are the great concernment of all mankind, than all the Philosophers of the heathen world did.

The Scribes and Pharisees busied themselves in long and perplexed genealogies, and in finding out strange mysteries in the very letter of the law, where they never were designed; in reviving obscure traditions, and in dark ænigmatical commentaries upon the text of Moses. And it was the custom of the heathens to wrap up all their knowledge, whether in nature or morality, in hieroglyphicks, in dark allusions and similitudes, in knotty sayings, and odd far-fetched inferences, and in all things they said, it seemed as if they took a pride in not being understood.

With what strange notion did Plato amuse the world with, concerning his *anima mundi*, and fivefold subordination of worlds, *de primo uno, & de circumvolutione omnium rerum circa deum, et in rebus quæ ad mores spectant qualia tradit aut potius somniatur communi hominum intellectui prorsus aliena. De reminiscentia, de pulchro & bono, de* Κακο, δαιμονια *et* Ευδαιμονια. Some few

few Philoſophers may apprehend what he means, and hardly theſe, but of what uſe are theſe things to the whole race of men? And much leſs can they apprehend what Pythagoras means by his doctrine of numbers, by his odd number which he makes finite, and his even which he makes infinite, and the long ſeries of philoſophy he draws out of theſe, all mere cobwebs ſpun out of his own bowels, without any foundation in the truth of things: what odd and extravagant things has he taught concerning the tranſmigration of ſouls, and our affinity to beaſts? And how did he take care by ſymbols that no body ſhould underſtand what he thought every one ought to practiſe? SERM. XXXI.

And thus moſt of the Philoſophers rendered obſcure what was in itſelf eaſy, as if they had a mind to cover the plaineſt things from the knowledge of others. But how much then to be admired is he, who though he knew all things, yet made no oſtentation of his learning or knowledge? Though he revealed thoſe heavenly myſteries which none of them had the leaſt glympſe of, yet he made them ſo plain and eaſy, that none could be ignorant of the truth of them; ſo that all men might ſo far become divine Philoſophers, as to underſtand what ſhould promote their welfare here, and procure them immortal happineſs hereafter: and though he ſpoke often in parables, yet they were plain to all who were not wilfully blind, and ſuch only he deſigned

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ed should not see, and therefore it was that he used them, *that seeing they might not see, and that hearing they might not understand.*

From whence we may see the error of those persons, who are at great pains in rendering these principles of christianity dark and obscure, which he hath delivered so plainly: he avoided all unnecessary niceties and abstractions, which served only to puzzle our understandings, but not to influence our lives; it had been happy for the church of Christ if all the preachers of the Gospel had laboured to imitate their great Lord and Master in this respect; but instead of recommending and enforcing the doctrines of the Gospel with that plainness and simplicity he delivered them, how have some spent all their lives in propagating empty and fruitless notions, and in raising difficulties that are not, on this side the grave at least, to be solved; and what a stir has been kept about trifles? How many questions have been proposed to be discussed in publick which are impious and prophane? And what a strange custom has prevailed of late, of mingling vain philosophy with our divinity, of solving all the methods of our redemption as well as of the creation by hypothesis, as if what Christ hath delivered us concerning this matter were not learned enough, and as if they were too mean for scholars, wherein I will be bold to say, that most of that which now is called learning, is but the dreams and fancies of men who let go the substance of religion, and

and catch at a shadow?---And that the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified is the noblest, as well as the most interesting and important exercise of our understandings and affections. SERM. XXXI.

Having now in some measure considered the sum and substance of what our Saviour spoke, I shall make a few observations on the style he used.

1st. And the 1st is, that it was natural, his expression was plain and easy, his words were such as were generally understood, and common in the conversation of the world, his similitudes and illustrations were taken from the most obvious things in nature, as from seed sown in the ground, a grain of mustard seed, a net, a husbandman, or from the known customs of the world, as that of an unjust steward, and the parable of the ten virgins, and many such like: he did not make use of any terms of particular arts and sciences, because the Gospel was designed for the illiterate as well as for the learned, and *that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

This plainness and perspicuity is visible through the whole course of his preaching and conversation, and this was one thing that made the generality of the people admire his discourses, because he made every thing he spoke so plain and so easy; he did not spake in the language of a sect or party, but after such a manner

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manner as was common and usual, so as to make what he said equally intelligible to all sorts of people.

Now in this the preachers of his Gospel should closely and industriously follow him, and the neglect of this may well be counted as one of the reasons, why preaching is generally attended with so little success. And there are two extreams which many run into, and thereby avoid the right path which has been marked out for us.

One is that of mean and sordid expression, which is the general style of people who have fallen into any degree of enthusiasm, they having neither learning nor inspiration, but by the help of spiritual pride and a warm imagination, or a heated fancy, they acquire a custom of heaping together a parcel of godly words and sentences, with numberless repetitions of God and Christ, calling election, reprobation; faith, regeneration; salvation, damnation; and other words of godly, important, and terrible sound, without any connexion, or reasonable, useful application or purpose; thus taking God's holy name in vain, prophaning his truths, and so terrifying some, and deceiving others, but never make any sober and steady proselytes to the doctrine of the Gospel; and then that they may appear to have greater intimacy with Heaven, and familiarity with God, they are apt to use many odious and indecent comparisons, bold and trifling expressions, sometimes even to prophaneness

prophaneneſs and blaſphemy, and this they call inſpiration, and ſpeaking by the ſpirit, which is the reſult of the greateſt folly and ignorance, and a mere mockery of God and religion. SERM. XXXI.

But 2dly, the other extreme, though it is not ſo bad, yet it is almoſt as uſeleſs, and that is when preachers neglecting the ſubſtance of what they are to ſpeak, and the conditions of the people they are to ſpeak to, they employ the ſtrength of their mind in finding out witty alluſions, in adorning their diſcourſes with all the gaudy figures of rhetoric, and delight in round periods, or quaint ſentences, and labour to be ſurprizing in every thing they ſay.

This is the common fault of young beginners, who coming newly from the exerciſes of the ſchools, imitate the ſame ſtrain in divine things, which they uſed to admire in prophane, and where they are not made ſenſible of their error in time, it diſſipates and breaks the ſtrength of their minds, and they contract ſuch a habit of turning every thing that way, that they carry on the humour to the laſt, and ſo continue to talk like boys when they are grey.

But we muſt remember that we are to preach and not to declaim, and that the myſteries of the Goſpel and precept of Chriſtianity, ſhould be treated on and enforced, in a ſtyle like to that in which they were delivered; they are deprived of their force, by being thus diſguiſed, and loſe all their reverence in

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such a light and gaudy garb. The word of God is of itself quick and powerful, and sharp as a two edged sword, but this method of preaching it, takes off all its edge, and prevents its power and efficacy. St. Paul who was well instructed in all the eloquence of his time, yet says, that his speech and his presence was not *with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power.* It is true, divine things should be handled with as exact politeness of language and style, as any worldly matters, and it requires as much judgment to speak in the Church as in the Court, but this does not consist in a great variety of metaphors and figures of rhetorick, but in the purity, and plainness, and significancy of our expression: that is not true eloquence which dazzles, but that which gives a useful light, and well proportioned to the eyes of men's understanding; that is ever the best expression which is most natural, and which comes neareſt to that used in common conversation: our words are but the pictures of our thoughts, and as that is always the best picture which most exactly represents the truth of the thing, and not that which is painted in gaudy colours, so that expression is best, which gives the best and the most lively ideas of things as they are in themselves.

It is no easy thing to make our expressions full and proper and significant; to make them easy and intelligible, and the whole series of our discourse clean and pure, not to wander in genera-

generalities, but to represent all our notions clearly and distinctly, so as to have a fixed and determinate sense in all we say, that all our meaning may be as clear as the light, so that other people shall easily apprehend us; so to adapt our expression to the nature of the things, that it keep pace with them, and rise and fall together with the subject. SERM. XXXI.

These are the properties of a true style, and the shortest way to attain them all, is ever to be attentive to the matter we treat of, without being over sollicitous about our words; let us take care to think well and distinctly, and the expression will generally first offer itself which is most suitable to the nature of the thing, and we shall find that few of our thoughts are abortive in the expression but what were imperfect in the conception; if we observe this, our judgment will improve, and our style will become more polished every day; but if we apply our thoughts chiefly to the choice of words and sentences, our judgments will by degrees be corrupted and impaired, and all our discourses turned into froth and levity.

2. Another thing observable in our Saviour's style is, that it is strictly rational, and often closely argumentative, though the inferences are sometimes obscure to us, from the custom of the eastern nations, who spoke the substance of the premises, and left the application to be made by the hearers. And there

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are very few things pathetical in any of his discourse; plain reason, and instruction, and propagating the truth was what he aimed at, and he did not endeavour so much to move men's affections as to inform their understandings, and this was also what his Apostles had chiefly in view in their writings.

Now from hence we may see plainly, how much both the preachers and people have been mistaken, who are apt to value every thing they hear or speak, only as it is more or less pathetick. But certainly, that eloquence which works upon the understanding, is more valuable than that which only moves the affections. There is no such triumph as a convicted mind, this receives a lasting impression: the reason of man is fixed and steady, and always the same, and does not easily change; but all our passions are fleeting and transient, they ebb and flow, and are then aptest to vanish when they are at the greatest height; and therefore, though we may move men's affections strongly, yet we may have but little influence upon their wills; the only way to do this effectually, is to make our way to it through the reason of men, and if we prevail on that, we need not be concerned about putting their passions into a tumult, for this often makes people think themselves very pious and holy when they are very wicked, and who are always very religious when their affections are warmed, and yet are very prone to commit sin in cold blood.

Certainly

Cerainly this very mistake has done much harm in the world: I allow that we should try to sway the wills of men, by working on their passions as well as their reason, but then we must always begin with this latter, and when the understanding is fully informed, then we are to endeavour to stir the affections. SERM. XXXI.

Nothing is more vain and foolish, than to strive as some men do, to be all pathetical, and who seem to expect to raise the minds of their hearers with their very first paragraph; but in this they must be disappointed, for you never move them less than when you openly appear most resolved to do so; but when a good foundation has been laid by convincing their understanding, then indeed you may hope to engage their passions and affections in the cause; but still this is to be attempted gradually, and when we have in some measure succeeded in it, when we have wrought them up to a good pitch, it will then be prudent, not to continue our endeavour too long, but leave off in time, and give them intermission, for the nature of men's affections requires it, and which will not bear to be strained too high.

II. I come now in the 2d place to consider some of those advantages our blessed Saviour had beyond all others, *to speake as never man spake*; and how far he is imitable by us, in those instances. And accordingly,

1. The first great advantage our blessed Saviour had towards speaking, was that autho-

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rity with which he spoke; this was so peculiar to his discourses, and so remarkable in his whole manner of teaching, that after his sermon in the mount, St. Mathew says the *people were astonished at his doctrine.* ἐξεπλήσσοντο they were struck with amazement for *he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes*; by which we are to understand these two things.

First, that he spoke immediately from himself, and not by commission only from another, not from former writings and tradition, but from an inherent power of prescribing and making new laws. The Scribes and Pharisees spoke altogether from tradition, and the written law of Moses; the most they could pretend to was to explain and confirm all they said with great names and authorities; Christ spoke like a lawgiver and not an interpreter, the style of the Pharisees was *ye have heard that it hath been said of old.* His form of speech was, *But I say unto you.* He was *the way, the truth, and the life,* the voice of God himself, and therefore all he said flowed from an eternal fountain of truth.

Now this form of speaking was altogether new to the Jews, and it was the more surprizing, because the spirit of prophecy had for a long time quite ceased among them, insomuch that from the time of Malachi, for about 400 years, there had been no Prophet in Israel, and they were so sensible of this, that it prevailed among them as a received æra, and

manner

manner of counting their years. Hitherto Prophets, *i. e.* to the time of Esdras, from thence downward, only learned men; none but Scribes and Doctors of the Law, who could give no final determination of any controversy in Religion, and could only back their opinions with reason and authorities; and to this refers that expression in the first book of the Maccabees, where it is said that *the affliction of the children of Israel was at that time greater than had befaln them, since the time they had no Prophet among them.* And accordingly if any matter of controversy arose, as there did not a few, which could not be agreed upon, they always left it undecided until God should send them a Prophet, which they all lived in expectation of, and every sect among them looked for with impatience, affirming with much confidence and assurance, that he would decide the matter on their side, and this was the reason of *their glorifying God*, Luke vii. 16. and saying, *a great Prophet is risen up amongst us, and God hath visited his people.* And for the same reason, the woman of Samaria proposed to our Saviour, the great point of controversy that had run to such a mighty height between the Jews and the Samaritans.

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But our blessed Saviour fell in with no sect or party among them, they were all in the wrong, and he took every fair occasion of letting them know it, without regard to the persons of men. And this is the other thing sig-

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nified by his speaking with authority, he spoke the truth impartially, opened to them all their errors, and reprehended their vices: his business was to deliver the will of God, though it was contrary to the opinions and practices of every sort and degree of men among them; insomuch that he was most severe upon those who had the greatest reputation among the people for sanctity and holiness: this courage of his in reprehending all sorts of vice, and declaring the truth on all occasions, the people took great notice of, *Lo he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him.*

Now this authority with which he delivered himself, and the confirmation of what he said with miracles, gave his words a power and influence beyond all human eloquence, this was peculiar to him, and therefore inimitable. However, there is so much of that authority derived down upon us, as gives our preaching a virtue and efficacy beyond what is merely human; our commission is from God and not from man, *as my Father sent me, so send I you*; from these words we first derive our power and authority, from hence it is, that we are, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. viii. 23. *The messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.* This word glory, is used in scripture, to signify the divine presence in any place or person, and the meaning of it here is, that the presence of Christ is in us; his authority and power goes along with our ministry,

ſtry, and in this ſenſe it is, that he himſelf ſays, *Lo, I am with you even to the end of the world.* SERM. XXXI.

The Apoſtles when they were filled with the Holy Ghoſt, the effect of it was that *they ſpoke the word of God with boldneſs*, and St. Paul exhorts the Epheſians to *pray for him, that utterance might be given to him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the myſtery of the Goſpel.* We are to be followers of them, as they were of Chriſt, and put on the ſame courage and reſolution, and deliver ourſelves with that decent authority that becomes the dignity of our truſt, not that imaginary ſemblance of authority put on by a haughty brow or threatning look, by violence or paſſion, or extravagance in the voice or geſtures; theſe are the weakneſſes of human nature, and have nothing of the power of Chriſt. This we muſt leave to enthuſiaſts, thoſe awkward mimicks of true inſpiration; we are not of that *manner of ſpirit.* The boldneſs and aſſurance I ſpake of is, that which proceeds from a firm perſwaſion of our divine commiſſion, and the concurrence of that Holy Spirit which attends the execution of it; from a true zeal for the glory of God and his Church; from a conſciouſneſs of the ſincerity of our own repentance, and of a regular piety and habitual holineſs of life; theſe are the things that inſpire a divine orator with decent courage and aſſurance; that raiſe him above all the terrors and the flatteries of the world, ſo that

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that no prospect of worldly interest or grandeur can byas his mind, or give a wrong turn to his thoughts; that on all occasions that require it, he is ready to declare himself for the truths of God, to own and acknowledge them in the midst of dangers, to make publick confession of them, and never conceal any part of the truth for the advantage of religion, but leave the success to God, who best knows upon what foundations to establish his Church.

2. Another great advantage beyond all men living, which our Saviour was endued with towards speaking was, his divine knowledge, that excellent spirit of wisdom, by which he had a full comprehension of all the truths of God, and the hidden things of nature; he grew in wisdom as in stature, and was wise as he was good by nature, and this made people wonder so often, when he was a child disputing with the doctors; they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and again, *whence hath this man this wisdom?* And *how knoweth this man letters having never learned?* But the Spirit was upon him without measure, and consequently his knowledge infinite, it must have been the same with that of God, and therefore it is, that the Apostle St. Paul says, *in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; it was this that enabled him to speak things beyond the reach of all men, because he knew so much more than any other man, and particularly of the secret will of God

God, which he came to reveal to us: he plainly declared that all things were delivered to him of his Father, and *that no man knoweth the Son but the Father*; *neither knoweth any man the Father*, (i. e.) the true nature and the mind of God, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him, (a strong proof this text is, that we can have no dependence on any of our reasonings about the nature and will of God and his purposes relating to mankind, but what is grounded on the Gospel of his Son Christ Jesus). Now if the things themselves which he declared, had not been the result of wisdom and knowledge, the most happy expression could never have so powerfully enforced them on his hearers. Now this very thing in which our Saviour excelled by nature, is laid down by all who treat of rhethorick and oratory, as the main foundation of all true eloquence. Where there is not by nature a solid judgment and quickness of apprehension, a good invention and lively fancy, they are not to be had otherwise than by inspiration, which no man can now expect, they may be improved but never obtained by labour; they are the gift of God, not by inspiration but by a felicity of nature.

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Nor is this sufficient to make a man divinely eloquent, unless these natural endowments are improved by education and learning, for we can no more be learned and knowing, than we can be virtuous by nature as

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as our Saviour was, and therefore we must acquire these by labour and industry, and furnish our minds with a stock of learning and knowledge by those methods, which are laid down for that purpose. *Nemo* says Cicero, *poterit esse omni laude cumulatus orator, nisi erit omnium magnarum rerum & artium scientiarum consecutus*, and what he says of Brutus, one of the most eloquent men of the age, is, *erat in Bruto natura admirabilis, exquisita doctrina & industria singularis.*

Now these are no less necessary to divine than human oratory, and the truths of the Gospel should be taught and enforced with some degree of that knowledge by which they were first revealed: from whence appears the folly and arrogance of those enthusiasts, who take upon them the performance of this most important and difficult work, without either parts or learning; for want of that good sense which is the life and soul of oratory, they are but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, and while they set up for a more immediate imitation of Christ and his Apostles, are beyond all others the fartheſt from them; little considering that fulness of sense there was in all he and they said, and that closeness of consequences, and wisdom of the application, which are things they never think of.

The one great fundamental rule of eloquence is, to consult good sense, and to be strictly rational in all we say, even when we are least argumentative; *dicere nemo bene potest*

teſt niſi qui prudenter intelligit, one grain of good ſenſe and ſound reaſon is more truly valuable, than all the flouriſhes of rhetorick; whoſoever is rational and plain will be eloquent, and whoſoever is not ſo, may amuſe and ſurprize his hearers, but will never convince or perſwade them. SERM. XXXI.

3. Another advantage peculiar to him that our Saviour was poſſeſſed of, was, that extraordinary concurrence of the Holy Spirit in all he ſaid and did, which proceeded more immediately by emanation from himſelf. This wrought in the hearts of thoſe he ſpoke to, in a ſecret and powerful manner, and gave his words an irreſiſtible force in the minds and conſciences of all that were rightly diſpoſed to receive the truths of God; it was by this that he ſo frequently touched their hearts, and the Diſciples who were going to Emmaus, felt the power of it when they found their hearts burn within them. Now though this be a perfection which no mere man can attain to, yet there are two ways of arriving at ſome degree of it.

1ſt. By a lively imagination, which does not only enable men to form clear and diſtinct ideas and perceptions of things, but gives them a ſtrange power of conveying them with great ſtrength and clearneſs into the minds of others, nay, it enables them even mechanically, to raiſe the like paſſions in others by which they themſelves are actuated; we are all inſtruments of the ſame make and frame, and o-

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thers being men of like passions with ourselves, when our fancy is disposed to receive vigorous and strong expressions of things, by a secret power in nature, we stamp the like on all about us; there is inchantment in it, and by the help of this alone, strange effects have been wrought: many things have been attributed to magick, which were effected by working up men's imaginations to a mighty pitch, so as to strike the minds and bodies with a secret and irresistible force.

We see it to be the constant practice on the stage for men to impregnate their minds strongly with those passions they would raise in others, they endeavour to forget themselves, and believe they are the very persons they represent; and by this means their passions move us, though we know them to be feigned. Now if the imagination has such an influence upon the hearts of men in things fictitious and imaginary, what may its power be in things real and serious, and of the most exalted and important nature? So that we should direct the whole force of our minds that way, if we hope to incline others to be affected as we would perswade them to be; we must plainly and strongly appear to have a quick and a feeling sense of those truths which we would perswade our hearers to believe.

But the 2d and most effectual way of supplying the want of that holy Spirit our Saviour had,

had, is by our earneſt and inceſſant prayer to Almighty God, that his Spirit would lead us into whatſoever ſhall be moſt for his glory. This is abſolutely neceſſary, if we deſire that our words ſhould not fall to the ground but *be fruitful in the hearts of our hearers.* SERM. XXXI.

But this and the further proſecution of this ſubject, I ſhall defer to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON XXXII.

The divine eloquence of our Saviour considered.

This was preached before the convocation January the 30th, being Sunday, 1703.

JOHN vii. 46.

The officers answered, never man spake like this man.

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IN my former discourse upon these words, when I had shewn the occasion of them, and observed the transcendent excellency of the divine eloquence of our blessed Saviour beyond that of the most celebrated orators among the Heathen; I proposed to enter upon the consideration of this divine eloquence of our blessed Saviour; that through the assistance of that spirit that was upon him without measure, we may in some degree copy after him in this, which is the great privilege and glory of our order: And in doing this, I did, as I then proposed, in the first place, consider

consider the matter and substance of what he spoke, and the stile he used. SERM. XXXII

I then also, in the second, proposed to consider some of those advantages our blessed Saviour had beyond all others, to *spake as never man spake*, and how far he is imitable by us in these particulars. At which time I shewed you, that the first advantage he had was that peculiar authority with which he spoke.

The second was that excellent spirit of knowledge which he was endued with.

The third was that extraordinary concurrence of the holy spirit in all he said, and that too by a more immediate emanation from himself. There were two things I then observed were to supply this defect in us; the one was the power of the imagination, the use of which I then shewed.

2. And therefore I am now to proceed to the other thing, which is to supply the want of this in us; and that is, the same concurrence of the holy Spirit of God; which, because it cannot operate with us after the same manner by emanation from ourselves, is therefore to be obtained by earnest and incessant prayer to Almighty God. This is absolutely necessary in order to the forming our conceptions, and then giving them power in the hearts of men.

That concurrence of the Spirit is necessary to the right forming the conceptions of our mind, and the cloathing them with such expressions as shall make them conduce most to

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the great ends of preaching, that the meditations of our hearts, and the words of our mouths, may be first acceptable to God, such as are truly meet and proper for his own divine purposes; and then his Spirit goes along with them, giving them virtue and influence upon the hearts and consciences of our hearers. There is so great a variety in the frame of mens hearts, in the inward make and dispositions of their minds; and the conditions of mens souls are so very different, that nothing less than infinite knowledge can contrive what shall be of greatest efficacy. He only who is the searcher of the heart, and knows all its times and seasons; who sees perfectly how the dispositions of men differ from one another, and the same man from himself; and with all the secret and insensible degrees of our spiritual growth and improvement in holiness: He it is that can direct and lead the mind into what shall be most for his own glory, and for supplying the various wants and necessities of those particular souls that are to hear us. It doth not fall within the compass of human understanding and sagacity to see all this, and provide for it: It is true, sound doctrine is good at all times, but the secret is in the due dispensation of it, and in the proper application of it to the present condition of mens souls; to think and speak, not only what is in itself good and commendable, but what will be of real benefit and advantage, which lies far out of our sight, and for the most part, to be discerned only by the all-seeing

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ing eye of God. Persons who spoke formerly by immediate inspiration, often knew not the main importance and full extent of what they said; the very same is in some degree true of those who are acted by the ordinary operations of his spirit, that they know not what power and efficacy their words may have, nor how far they are adapted to the purpose by the secret insensible direction and conduct of the holy Spirit. But as this grace of God is necessary to lead us into all seasonable truths, so must it go along with our words, and prepare the hearts of our hearers to be wrought upon, that they may not fall to the ground, but leave a lasting impression in their minds, so as to have a real effect in making them more virtuous and holy. By good natural endowments and acquired abilities we may answer all other ends of preaching, but this only can answer that of edification. And this is one great advantage that sacred oratory hath beyond prophane, the effects of which, and the whole drift and scope, were known and felt; whereas the effect of preaching, that I mean which is peculiar to it, is as insensible as the growth and nourishment of our bodies; and yet at the same time it carries with it a persuasion above the strength of any thing in nature, and a force beyond the power of words. Though miracles are ceased, yet the power of faith remains strong and mighty, in order to the great and glorious ends of religion: And to this day thus much is sure, that the greater dependance

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a man hath upon the Spirit for the illumination of his mind, and the more intire trust he hath in God for the necessary concurrence of his grace with his words, if he is not wanting in his own endeavours, so much the greater will be his success and his reward.

It is a very uncertain way of judging of the success of preaching, by the opinion of men; they are indeed, many of them proper judges of what is good in itself, and how far it is agreeable to them; but how far it hath a real efficacy and success in the minds of men, for their reformation and improvement, is no easy matter to distinguish even in a man's self, and much less in others. The effect of preaching, in the consciences of men, and the true influence it hath upon their souls to make them truly virtuous and holy, is not to be known in this life; its operations are as secret, as those of the spirit that goes along with it: So that many who might have been in much esteem, may find that all the while they sowed but chaff; and others, whose incessant prayers and lively faith in God brought down the dew of Heaven upon what they *sow* and *plant*, shall be surprized with a plentiful harvest.

This consideration should make us possess our minds with a firm belief that, whatever may appear to ourselves or others, yet that no endowments or qualifications whatsoever will give our words that unseen energy which none but God can give; we may indeed dazzle our admirers, but there may be still wanting that

useful

useful light, and necessary warmth, which can come no way but from *the Father of lights.* SERM. XXXII

As Christ had this holy Spirit in himself, so we must have it by emanation from him. What we have to do then is, to put our minds into a posture to receive it, to give ourselves up to it, to consecrate our souls by due preparation for the descent of the Holy Ghost upon us; and to be earnest and incessant in our prayers to God for this blessed communication of his Spirit. There it not any thing in Scripture so particularly and expressly said to be the immediate reward of prayer, as this; *our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask it:* And again, James i. 5. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.* If God gives liberally, why should we not ask it frequently and importunately? and ever pray that God would sanctify our conceptions, and form them all to virtue and holiness; that by a secret conduct he would lead us insensibly into what shall have the greatest fitness and tendency to promote the salvation of souls; and then give it life and power in the consciences of men. Let us use the best of our endeavours to *plant* and *water*, and when that is done, let us hope for the increase, not as we preach, but as we pray. If we take care to perform this with that fervour and constancy that becomes us, then let us leave the event to God, who knows how to make all things work together so as to promote his own ends;

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who doth not judge of means as they appear to us; who loves to *make foolish the wisdom of this world*; and delights to bring about the greatest effects by the smallest instruments.

4. Another great advantage beyond all men living which our blessed Saviour was endued with towards speaking was, that insight he had into the hearts of men. As to that excellent spirit of knowledge that was in him in general, I have formerly spoke to it: This is but a part of it, and a more immediate qualification for divine eloquence and perswasion. St. John tells us, that *He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.* He was that λόγος, that eternal Word of God *by whom all things were made. He spoke us into being.* He *saw our substance yet being imperfect, and in his book*, the book of Nature, *were all our members written.* And therefore, when this *Word was made flesh*, he needed not to comeat the heart of man by any search or conjecture; for he discerned the parts of this fearful contexture and wonderful frame of human body; he couldtraverse over all this labyrinth, and saw perfectly that numerous train of subtle complicated lines, the neareſt instruments of the soul, which lie farout of the reach of all sense and human observation: He saw to the end of them all; where they receive the first impression from the mind, the common source of all our reasonings, of all our passions and affections. He knew where to touch upon them with most advantage, and could unfold

unfold them all, though miserably perplexed and tangled by the grievous corruption of our nature. SERM. XXXII

This perfect knowledge of the hearts of men, gave him an unspeakable advantage over them, and enabled him to speak to their thoughts often, and not to their words; as particularly in Math. ix. 4, 5, where it is said that *Jesus knowing their thoughts, answers, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier to say thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say arise and walk?* The thought of their heart was, that he blasphemed by that expression; and the force of his answer is this, that whether he used one or the other of those expressions, or any other, the miracle was never the less; words did not alter the nature of the thing, the fact was a sufficient proof of itself, of its proceeding from a divine power; and the reason of his choice of that expression was, that what he did might be a seasonable proof to them of his having it in his power to forgive sins. The word in the original is ἰδὼν, Jesus *seeing* their thoughts; which well expresses the manner of this knowledge, being by a direct intuition, by a proper innate power in himself, and not by any supernatural information. And so again, John viii. 3, when the Scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman taken in the act of adultery, with design to accuse him; for if he had acquitted her, then he had acted apparently against the law of Moses, and have been a justifier of sin-

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ners; if he had condemned her, then he assumed the power of the magistrate, they bringing her to him in a judicial way, as being one who took upon him to acquit and condemn sinners. He first declined answering, which made them more urgent, as being a snare from which he could not extricate himself; but he knowing the guilt of their souls, answered, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*; by which he made the woman's case their own, and struck them with such a sense of their own guilt, that they withdrew with shame. It was a strange surprizing judgment he passed, which acquitted the woman so far as to leave her room for repentance, and condemn the accusers, whose pride and obstinacy put them beyond all likelihood of it; and at the same time preserved a just veneration for the law of Moses, and left the power of sentence in the hands of the magistracy. This was such a complication of wisdom and knowledge, that no man else upon earth was capable of it; none but he who *knew what was in man*, who saw into the darkness of the heart, could pass over what men spoke, and direct his words to their most secret thoughts. By this means his hearers always found themselves, in what he said, not a tittle of it fell beside them, and when he foresaw that his speaking would not meet with success, he was always silent.

Now this it was that made him never open his mouth without effect, that gave him such unheard

unheard-of power over the minds and consciences of men, for the conviction of their reason and moving their affections; insomuch that the most feared and hardened consciences felt impressions of remorse and shame; they found themselves struck dumb and confounded in every attempt upon him, and owned, *He spake as never man spake.* Envy allowed him this; she confessed, as the Devils did, in the midst of her rage and torment; and the most inveterate of his enemies suffered his speaking to gain every effect upon them, but that of their conversion. But on the other hand, where his words met with hearts rightly disposed, as Solomon foretold of him, *his lips were like lillies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. His mouth was most sweet:* In the Hebrew it is, *His throat was sweetnesses*, alluding to the harmony of a charming voice: This it was that made his disciples forsake their worldly prospects, and follow after him with a call. His hearers *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth*, and found *their hearts burn within them while he was speaking.* By this wonderful knowledge of the heart of man, he hath so contrived all his discourses, that what he said to a few, was spoke to all mankind, and more need not be said to all generations of men; they will carry down with them the same efficacy to the end of the world, to prevail over the judgments of men, and never fail to sway their passions, whenever they are duly considered and applied.

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And now we must lower our thoughts, and descend from this stupendous height of eloquence, to consider what it is in ourselves, how this innate power of seeing directly into the hearts of men is to be supplied in us, and how we are by imitation to attain to a faint resemblance of this perfection. It is indeed a fall as low as from the Heaven to the Earth, and our eloquence to his is but as a shadow to the substance; however, it hath its virtue, though it be derived, therefore this knowledge of the heart, which we cannot have by intuition, we must acquire, in as great a degree as we are capable, by study and observation. Among the miraculous gifts afforded in the first times of the Gospel, one of them is said to be that of *discerning of spirits*; i. e. of judging of the sincerity of men's hearts, and of the qualifications of their minds for the reception of the Gospel, whether they were in a disposition to be wrought upon or no. This was necessary, that they might not *cast their pearls before swine*; and that since they had a great deal to do, they might not lose their time and their labour in fruitless endeavours. This gave the first preachers of the Gospel a mighty advantage, and enabled them to adapt their discourses to the several tempers of men, and led them into the use of such motives and arguments as were likeliest to succeed, and leave a lasting impression on their hearers. Now though there be nothing of this left in the Church, more than the ordinary direction and conduct

conduct of the holy Spirit of God, yet some persons are blessed with a peculiar strength of genius for the knowledge of men; they are very happy that way beyond others, and by a strange felicity of nature are let into this knowledge of the hearts of men: not of their present immediate thoughts, for that is miracle; but for a sharp discerning judgment, and a comprehensive understanding of the particular tempers and inclinations of men, so as to be able to apply themselves more closely, and bring all their discourses home to the present state and temper of men's minds; and this seems to be the distinguishing qualification of an orator. For men may have a good stock of knowledge both in words and things, and yet be very unhappy in the management and application of them, to the instruction or persuasion of others. *Nisi naturas hominum, vimque omnem humanitatis orator perspexerit, dicendo quod volet perficere nonpoterit.* (*Cicero de Orat: lib.* 1.) says Cicero, who studied mankind, and was therefore more eloquent than others, because he knew the strength and weaknesses of human nature. And another observes, *That men are no farther eloquent, than they are knowing in the heart of man.* The heart of man is a comprehensive word, and takes in all the powers of the mind, with the great variety of reasonings, of affections and inclinations to which it is subject; and their meaning is, that we should make ourselves acquainted with all its movements, and observe nicely all the mis-

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takes and errors of men; their opinions and prejudices; their dissimulations and hypocrisies, with all the false colours by which they are abused themselves, and impose on others. That we find out the true motives that sway men, and the real principle that acts them; and see how far the world is governed by humour, and passion, and interest; that we consider all their vain hopes, and groundless fears; their real vices, and imaginary virtues; the weakness of their judgments, and the force of their passions; and above all, to weigh well the great variety there is in men's tempers, and the true causes of their differences and agreements; how souls mingle or dissent, have a hidden attractive virtue to draw one another, or else rebound at every approach; what it is that makes them meet, and then fly off again; what secret chains they are that link them into parties, or divide them into factions; and what is the true nature of that discord or harmony of the mind, that makes people friends or enemies; thus we shall be able to turn our thoughts into all shapes, represent every one to themselves, and *become all things to all men.*

But there is no readier way to the knowledge of other men's hearts, than by being well acquainted with our own; if we look inward, observe nicely what is doing there, we shall be able to give a good conjecture at what passes in the minds of others; for we are all men of like passions, we are all liable to the same affections and inclinations, and subject to the

same

same infirmities: So that by a diligent search and scrutiny into ourselves, so as to know one well, we go a great way towards the knowledge of all mankind. SERM. XXXII

Now the great necessity and usefulness of this knowledge of men is, in order to the two great ends of sacred eloquence; namely, for the information of men's understanding, and for the moving of their passions.

1, It conduces to the improvement of the understandings and reason of men, by enabling us to think and speak naturally, to express the truth of nature and religion, and give a just representation of all things as they are in themselves; and not give the mind the liberty of transforming them into what shapes we please, and never bring them forth to view but in some strange disguise of our own. When men set themselves to express their thoughts to others, they of course fall into one of these two very different ways, either to look without themselves, with design to represent things as they are, and paint them from the life with all the advantage they will bear; or, on the contrary, they frame to themselves conceptions without any strict regard to the justness and truth of things: So that from slight materials of knowledge, by various workings of the imagination, they raise to themselves feigned images, and labour to deck them with suitable ornaments, all the fancy of the speaker, and nothing of the likeness or true dress of nature; and therefore, the impressions they make

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on the hearers are none of her ſtamp. Now according as men bend the ſtrength of their minds to think either one of theſe ways or the other, and purſue it, ſo is their ſucceſs either a fictitious flaſh, or a ſubſtantial oratory. And if a man have ſo great a diffidence of himſelf as to venture on neither of theſe ways, but think and ſpeak altogether by imitation of others, then he follows the fortune of thoſe he copies after, and he is in the right or the wrong way, as they chance to be who go before him.

It is a great misfortune, and a very unhappy miſtake, not to ſee this from the beginning of a man's compoſures, ſo as not to ſet out right at firſt; becauſe the ſucceſs of his whole life depends much upon it. *Reſpicere exemplar vitæ, morumq;*, is one of the beſt rules that can be given; ever to have an eye to the life and manners of men, ſo as to make them your model and pattern; *et veras hinc ducere voces*; and employ the vigour of the mind in fitting our expreſſions to the things, and not in adapting of things to our expreſſions. This is certainly the fundamental rule of all oratory both ſacred and prophane, *to think and ſpeak of every thing in nature and religion as it is.* It is the moſt plain and ſimple rule in the world, and therefore one would think the eaſieſt to be obſerved; and perhaps the reaſon why it is ſo overlooked is, becauſe it is ſo obvious; ſo that by lying open to all men, it is in truth become the great ſecret of eloquence.

Men

Men are apt to think it below them, they think every body can do that which so many thousands have attempted in vain; and in truth they will not descend so low as to be truly eloquent. SERM. XXXII

It is true, this genuine oratory walks upon the ground, and yet at the same time *caput inter nubila condit*, it hath a divine power and efficacy. It is what every body is apt to think he could do when he sets about it; *quisq; sibi speret idem*, says the poet, *frustraq; laborat, ausus idem*. He little knows the danger of the attempt, when he dares to describe original nature, to express the true life and spirit of religion, and paint out the beauty of holiness in its true and genuine colours. It requires some mastery of thought and expression to do this, a comprehensive mind, and a judgment enlarged and formed by reading and observation. There is danger in speaking plain, and following the simplicity of nature; because a man is then under a necessity of speaking good sense, and to the purpose; all his defects are visible and glaring; all his failings are more conspicuous and less pardonable when he doth not perform with some truth and exactness; so that a man without sufficient qualifications, may aim at it to his undoing, so as to appear very flat and insipid, who might have made some tolerable figure in any other way of oratory,

This is what is properly the chastity of eloquence, which carries with it a secret irresist-

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ible power, and charms beyond the most exquisite artificial beauty: It makes its way to the heart, while the other only plays about the eyes and ears, and floats in the imaginations of men.

When you thus tread in the steps of nature, and neither lag too far behind, nor out-run her, you are sure not to wander, but that your discourses will at length come home to every man; they will feel what is said; there is something within them that echoes to your words, gives a tacit consent, acknowledges every thing that is spoke, and owns that it is so. Every thing that is spoke according to the truth of nature and religion, is soon understood, and finds an easy assent when it comes without any unnatural disguise, because it meets with faculties agreeable, and there is something congenial to it in the mind, founded in that connexion and correspondence there is between all truth; and for that reason it is, that all abstractions on the one hand, and all mighty flights of oratory on the other, have little of solidity and real knowledge in them when they come to be unravelled, and put into plain words; because such as affect them, are not describing nature or religion, but themselves, and labour to represent it, not as in reality, but what it is in their imaginations: They draw out their brains into curious webs, which discover much of admirable art and fineness of parts, which are only to be admired, and have neither solidity nor use; by which means it too often happens that men

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are never more superficial than when they pre- SERM. tend to go to the bottom of things. XXXII

This knowledge of the heart is in order to moving of the passions; but because the use and management of the passions in religion will not come within the compass of this discourse, I shall pass on to

5. Another great advantage towards speaking, which our blessed Saviour had peculiar to him, was his unspotted innocence, that divine purity and holiness that was in him. He was that *Lamb without blemish*, who had not the least stain of actual or original guilt, and remained all his life-time in such undefiled purity and holiness, that at his death *He offered himself up without spot to God.* This was the holiness of God; *for in him dwelt the fullness of the godhead bodily:* His humanity was partaker of the perfections of the divinity: And though he was *the son of David according to the flesh*, yet he was *the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness*, of that spirit that was upon him without measure. He had not the least error in his understanding, or corruption in his will, but had in himself the utmost perfection of all virtue and goodness; there lay their original characters; so that he could describe them all from his own breast, the source from whence all holiness is derived upon us: This gave his speaking an unknown influence and authority. In his discourse with the Jews, he appeals to his innocence; *Which of you convinceth me of sin? and if I say the truth, why do*

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ye not believe me? He gives them the true reaſon why they believed him not, becauſe he told them the truth; for had he been a wicked impoſtor, and told them a lye, they would have believed him upon ſlighter evidence and demonſtration than he gave them; but that rendered their infidelity utterly inexcuſable, when it was plain they had no juſt exception either to his perſon or his diſcourſes. Nothing could render this joint evidence ineffectual, as he obſerves to them, but a ſeared and hardened conſcience; for thoſe who had ears to hear, this gave his diſcourſes invincible power and efficacy. When he ſat diſcourſing with the Doctors in the Temple, we read, that all that *heard him were aſtoniſhed at his underſtanding and anſwers.* They could not but be ſtruck with that air of ſweetneſs and innocence that his diſcourſes at that time received, by their coming from the mouth of a child: He had the ſame innocence when he was paſt thirty years of age; and to ſuch as conſidered, it muſt have been then more wonderful and ſurprizing, and have given his words inexpreſſible grace and energy.

Now this is a qualification of no ſmall conſequence to a chriſtian orator; and though we can have no ſuch inherent perfect holineſs of our own, yet, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, we *may be made partakers of his holineſs,* by a diligent and conſtant imitation of his virtue and innocence. Our preaching cannot have that authority and power, which is peculiar to unerring

ring obedience, and unstained innocence; but it may have that good degree of assurance on our part, and influence upon others, which proceeds from a consciousness in ourselves of an unfeigned repentance, and a sincere habitual endeavour of uprightness and integrity of life. This virtuous good disposition of the mind is a qualification laid down by those Heathens who have given the best rules of oratory, as absolutely necessary to eloquence and persuasion. None can be a good orator, says Cicero, but he that is a good man, and adds, *viri probi sermo licet lenociniis destitutus sit, satis tamen naturâ suâ ornatur; nec quicquam non diserté quod honestè dicitur*; and in another place, *Qualis cujusq; animi affectus, talis est homo; qualis autem ipse homo est, talis ejus est ooratio.* (Cicero, vol. ii. p. 397) and certainly if in the opinion of Heathens, no man could be truly eloquent and speak well without a good sense of moral honesty, we may well think it no less necessary in order to the effectual preaching of the Gospel; nay more, as much as the revelations of it are beyond the meer light of nature, so there is a sense of piety and holiness required in the mind of the speaker, in proportion to the height and excellence of evangelical graces, beyond virtues purely moral.

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How much the habitual practice of a good life conduces to the efficacy and success of preaching, is very obvious from that advantage it gives us in the opinion of others, by disposing them to hear without prejudice or reluc-

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tance; it reconciles them to what is said, and gives it authority and weight; and devout persons are but too apt to have men's persons in admiration: it is in itself no real disadvantage to the truth, to be spoke by those who have little of it in their own hearts, however, it is among the infirmities of human nature, that the best of people then are apt to nauseate and reject it, the mind shrinks at it, it closes itself and denies it admittance. But seared and incorrigible sinners find ease and comfort in the wickedness of the preacher; it quiets the clamours of their consciences, and they value themselves upon open profaneness in opposition to that secret hypocrisy. But all true virtue and holiness carries on it a stamp of the Divinity; it hath so much of the likeness of God, that it darts terrour into their Souls; the words of a good man break in upon the most hardened consciences, and leave their goads behind them, and where they cannot dispossess men's vices, they extort a confession of the truth, and make them fear and tremble before it.

Now besides the advantage a virtuous and good Life gives us in the opinion of men, by reconciling them to what is said, and disposing them to be wrought upon, it hath a mighty influence upon ourselves in order to divine eloquence and perswasion; it enables us to form just and lively conceptions of all things in Religion. By a hearty sincere endeavour of doing the will of God, we shall arrive to a good degree of knowledge in it, and be able

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to think and speak of the nature of virtue and holiness after such a manner as is not attainable any other way. No man can describe the true life of Religion but he that lives it: who can speak so exactly of all moral virtues and evangelical graces, as he that makes it the chief ambition of his Soul to practice and acquire them? Who can express the sorrows of a truly broken and contrite Heart, like him who hath felt that *sorrow which works a repentance never to be repented of?* Who can tell what that love of God is, that raises a man above the world and all things in it, like him whose breast is inflamed with a sense of his perfections, and of that intire dependance he hath upon him? And who can discover the pleasures of a good conscience, like that man who hath arrived to some good degree of joy in the Holy Ghost, who hath placed his rest in God, hath arrived to a full trust in his mercy through the ineffable almighty virtue and efficacy of the blood of Christ. Then it is that a man addresses himself feelingly to the consciences of others, when he speaks from his own experience, and hath run through that set of temptations with which the Devil is used to assault men in the whole course of a christian life: When he describes his own infirmities, and his conquests, his temptations and his victories; his fears and his hopes; his failings and recoveries; his own despondence, and his assurances; so true it is that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*

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discerned. The mind must be set apart and sanctified for this; it must be intirely given up to it, and the main current of a man's thoughts must run habitually that way; then he will be able to bring all these things *out of the treasure of his heart*, when it is thus enriched and become a choice repository of virtue and holiness.

But besides that true piety enlarges our thoughts, it gives them an additional force and vigour beyond the strength of our reasons and the power of words; and it is sure that nothing makes its way so forcibly to the hearts of others, as that which comes from the bottom of our own. As the Devil when he assumes the form of an Angel of light, so is a wicked man when he goes about to recommend virtue and describe the power of Godliness. He is a strange unnatural mixture of the two most disagreeing things in the universe, and a monster made up of a resemblance of Heaven and Hell; a man conscious to himself of secret unrepented guilt, of unmortified passions, and appetites in their full natural strength, when his lips go without his heart, his words must turn upon himself and fly in his face, and he is, though otherwise of great abilites and endowments, at best but *as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal*, nothing but noise, without any sense or feeling of what is spoke. His speaking on divine Subjects is strained and unnatural, and no dissimulation or hypocrisy can come up to the genuine air of sincere piety. For as there is something in vice and wickedness that makes a dis-

a discovery of itself, and can hardly be concealed, so there is something in sincere religion that cannot be counterfeited. When the mind is strongly impregnated with a sense of God and goodness, and the breast warmed with religion, it affects the very lineaments of the face; it breaks through the eyes and looks, and gives an expressive passion to the countenance; when the *mouth thus, speaks out of the abundance of the heart*, it inspires others with its sentiments and affections, and the man breathes out his soul with his words. SERM. XXXII

But of all virtues, that which a preacher is immediately concerned to secure, is that of a pure intention; without this, whatever the success be to others, the reward is lost to ourselves; we sell it all for the breath of men; perhaps but of a few whose gust we have chanced to hit; we prostitute the noblest employment to the poorest ends; and those who are given to this vanity, make it much more to themselves than it really is; they think of it without those weaknesses that are visible to discerning judgments, who see all their faults; and of that allay of envy which is never appeased but with the sacrifice of the object that troubles it, as it proved in the case of our Saviour; it was *for envy they delivered him.* And yet he had nothing to be envied but his life and his discourses, for no man envies a miracle; he never spoke but to do good, and declined the praise of men, as much as was consistent with the exercise of his ministry; insomuch that it was remarkable of him, that after

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after his miracles and discourses, he withdrew himself from applause, betook himself to retirements and recesses to avoid it. He gave sufficient demonstration that he had eloquence enough to have brought about any worldly designs; that he had the hearts and passions of men at his command, and could work them up to what height he pleased, so as to turn and wind them irresistably to any thing but virtue and holiness. He could have prevailed on them to *make him a King*, and could have proceeded from thence to the empire of the world. The Devil saw this, and this was at the bottom of that temptation when he promised him all the kingdoms of the earth *if he would fall down and worship him.* But he answers him, *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, and therefore he could make use of this irresistable power of perswasion no farther than it was for the service of God, and promoting of the great ends of religion. *His kingdom was not of this world*, and accordingly he was so far from serving any temporal designs by it, that *he had no where to lay his head.* Here is a glorious example before us! and O! that we could imitate our great master in this divine virtue, who says of himself, *I seek not my own glory, there is one that seeks and judgeth*, meaning the searcher of hearts, who sees whither we direct all our discourses, who alone can bless them with success here, and give them an eternal reward of glory hereafter.

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